



BIG 80s ISSUE

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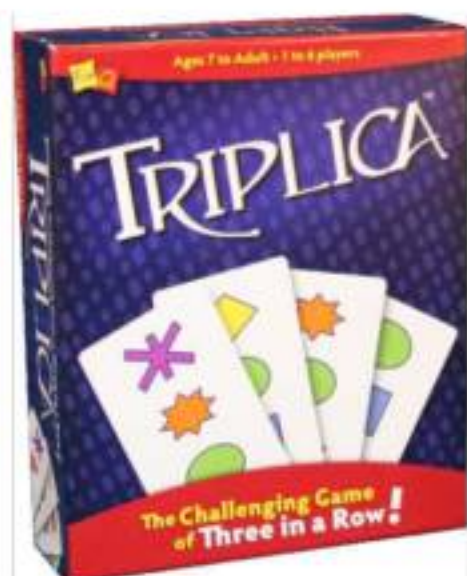
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**WINTER
2012 - 2013**

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SCARS

HANGIN OUT BY THE STATE LINE TURNIN HOLY WATER INTO WINE

When we thought about making an issue that celebrated the 80s we thought, "How could we just make one book?" Wouldn't it take two books for us to talk about all the reasons we loved it so? Three? Four?

Considering that so many of the things we love the most either originated, or had some defining moment, in the 80s, it seemed impossible to cull it all down. Because we believe the 80s changed the world.

Sure, there are lots of political, sweeping ways you can take that, but I'd rather take it to the low brow. Like Axl Rose effectively slaying glam by making an album no one could top with Appetite for Destruction. Or it being the decade that introduced us to Freddy, Jason, and Pinhead. The ebb and flow of early-80s punk vs. mid-80s punk. That David Lynch went from making the disastrous Dune to the sublimely f'ed Blue Velvet. Christ, Michael Jackson's Thriller!

It's all culture-changing stuff, and we've tried to showcase just a slice of it. (Or you'd be reading a 1,000 page book roughly five years from now.) Acting as the frontman for our 80s issue is Jason Edmiston's interpretation of Billy Idol from his Monsters of Rock series. Jason's an incredible artist and we hope you love Billy -- and the rest of the issue -- as much as we do.

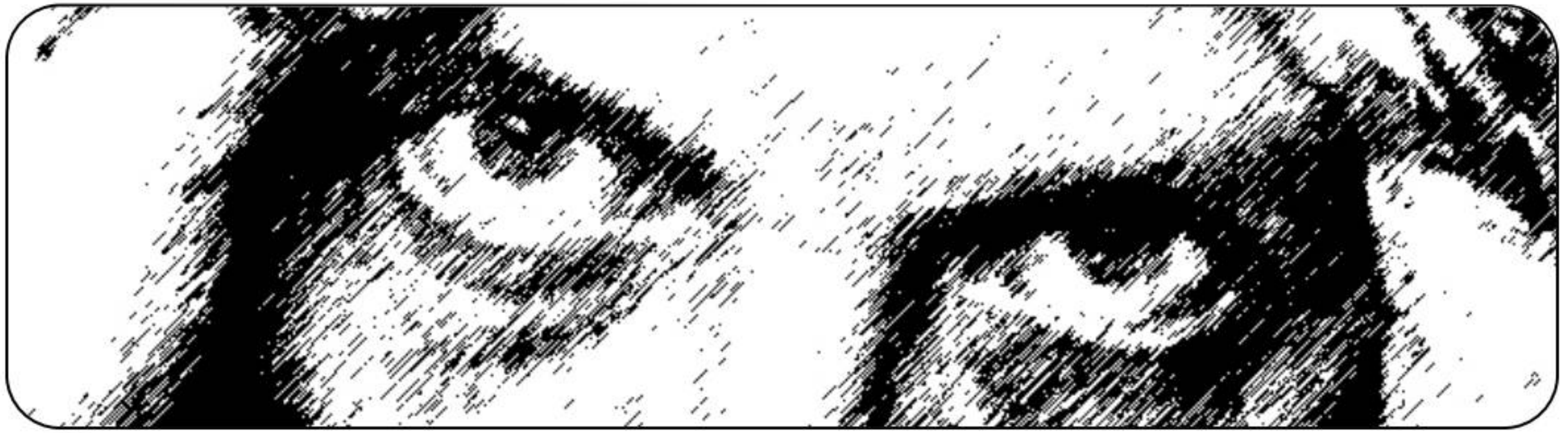
~ Fallon



GRIM N' GRITTY:

*THE MODERN LEGACY OF THE 80S ANTIHERO:
OR, "IN THE MIDNIGHT HOUR, SHE CRIED 'MOORE, MOORE, MOORE.'"
OR, "FRANKLY, MY DEAR, I'M THE GODDAMN BATMAN."*

by Gray Bouchard, @grayxmatch



So let me tell you about these two guys I know. One is named Alan. The other is named Frank. Alan is an Englishman who worships an ancient (and by his own admission fictional) snake god named Glycon and takes grooming tips from bridge trolls.

Frank is an American dude in favor of seeing the Occupy protestors curb-stomped for being "rapists" and "pond scum" that are ignorant to the threat of "Islamicism" (which he is convinced is a real word).

These two men are almost entirely responsible for the modern era of superhero comics, the good and the bad. So, you're welcome.

But we'll come back to our friends in a moment. You can say that it all starts with Gold. "The Golden Age of Comics": from the 1930s through early 50s. The era of American comics that gave birth to Su-

perman, Batman, Wonder Woman, and Captain America. The age that defined what a self-respecting, spandex-wearing super-guy ought to be: honest, upright, brave, a resolute defender of Truth, Justice, and the 'Merican way.

Of course, the tricky thing about anything gold is that, like a first place trophy won in Cub Scouts for your Soapbox racer, the luster has a tendency to fade.

Accordingly, the Gold standard for heroics was soon ushered out by the "Silver Age" between the 1950s and 1970s. Comic book fans were hungry for heroes that maybe didn't sound as much like their dad. Starting with DC's reintroduction of the new Flash, the Silver Age kicked off an era of younger, more vibrant heroes on stranger (yet more innocent) adventures. Marvel rose to prominence with awkward, irritable heroes like the Fantastic Four, the Hulk, the X-Men and Spider-Man. Space

aliens, giant monsters with names like GROO or FIN FANG FOOM, and light-hearted episodes of body-switching and costume retailoring were the type of hijinks that dominated the newsstands. Kid sidekicks were welcomed and encouraged.

Of course, if there's one thing that any good horror fan knows, it's that escalation is inevitable. Comic book fans are truly no different: joyful in their celebration of the medium, compulsive in their consumption, marginalized in their love of the outrageous, perhaps a bit socially retarded or developmentally stunted. The Silver Age, with it all its pseudo-Gods and Atomic Monsters, merely awakened readers to the potential of the medium to go deeper. Around the same time in film, the flamboyance and glamor of the Universal Monsters were giving way to the violence of Norman Bates and Romero's blood-thirsty zombies. Upon seeing something



that truly surprises (and shocks) you, it can become a sticky, hungry obsession. And, like Buffalo Chicken Go-Go-Taquitos slowly rotating at the 7-11 across the street from my apartment, once you've tasted it, you want MORE.

Cue the "Bronze Age." Shit. Gets. Real. Or, at least, more broadly "realistic." The outrageous monsters and mad scientists that our heroes defeated with a grinning aplomb gave way to psychopaths whose antics were far less good-natured. Violence and death started creeping into the previously sanitized books, seen in the deaths of Spider-Man's girlfriend Gwen Stacy and Aquaman's infant son at the hands of their respective villains.

people, daring them to go balls out, culturally take sharp turns at breakneck speeds, and create the type of inane bullshit that you saw in Jetsons cartoons.

The year 1980 found both Alan and Frank struggling to make a name for themselves in American popular comics. Frank had started work at Marvel as a penciler (and later writer) on Daredevil, where he was steadily gaining attention and praise for his noir-influenced tone.

Alan had had some success writing British published sci-fi comics for 2000 AD and revamping an obscure Captain Marvel knockoff called Marvelman for Warrior. Marvelman (later renamed Miracleman in

Alan was a clever chap with a deep, abiding love for the shining heroes of the Golden and Silver Age. He also had a deep love for LSD, arcane mysticism, and uncomfortable sexual liaisons between human women and subhuman monsters.

And, in his first real assignment for DC comics to revamp the ailing Swamp Thing title in 1983, Alan managed to work all his loves in a tidy, three year run on the book. His Swamp Thing was a mossy, muck-encrusted abomination with a heart of gold, a foxy human girlfriend, and penchant for growing sweet potato-like tubers laced with powerful psychotropics. His adventures were straight up psychedelic; he fought demons, underwater vampire



Former plucky kid sidekicks were given drug addictions (as in the case with Green Lantern and his sidekick, the predictably-named Speedy). Heroes were faced with moral and social quandaries that couldn't have their teeth punched out, like drug addiction, alcoholism, poverty, and racism. Still, the heroes facing these thinly-veiled social commentaries had that same sort of "Aw Shucks!" do gooderism that the Golden Age set into motion.

Which brings us to the 80s. And our friends Alan and Frank.

At the beginning of the 80s, there was a coked up futurity that presided over the decade. The perceived success of middling cultural revolutions in the 70s left Americans wanting to up the ante. It infected

a futile effort to avoid the world's most epic suing by Marvel Comics) was a pioneering work: taking the premise of Captain Marvel (whose magic word "KMOTA!" transformed him from weakling teenager to invulnerable Übermensch) and presenting it as a dark meditation on the ramifications of infinite power and infinite possibility. Within the pages of MM, you might find him having public sex with Marvelwoman, getting lectured by his infant daughter, remaking the world into a crime free utopia, or fighting his psychotic kid sidekick (Kid Marvelman, whose reign of terror began after he was raped in boarding school) in a battle that graphically ended the lives of millions.

But Alan Moore was just getting started.

punks, menstruating werewolves, as well as cute-n-cuddly space aliens modeled after Walt Kelly's Pogo characters.

But mostly, the innovation of Swamp Thing was about SEX. It's the sex presented in the book that made the most vivid impact on me when I stumbled across the ratty, 25-cent copies by father bought for me in the 3rd grade. When the book wasn't focusing on Swampy beating the tar out of something drippy and upsetting from under your bed, Moore delighted in presenting abstract representations of equally upsetting and drippy sex.

The aforementioned psychoactive sweet potatoes (that, as it is worth reiterating, THE SWAMP THING GREW IN HIS OWN BODY) were used as a hippy-dippy

communion for Swampy and his girlfriend Abby (whose own prior sexploits include being molested by her uncle Anton Arcane while he was pretending to be her ex-husband). Abby, when first presented with the tuber, still covered in soil and mud after having been freshly plucked out of Swamp Thing's lower back, hilariously asks, "Uh... Am I supposed to EAT it?" The implications of non-FDA approved uses for yams blew my adolescent mind.

And the wonder of it all? This was taking place in proper DC universe! When he wasn't doped up on wacky-spuds and balling his frequently topless and glistening girlfriend in a Louisiana swamp,

Silver Age adventures mostly involved foiling the Joker's cockamamie schemes to carve his face into Mt. Rushmore or replace everyone's shoes with roller skates. In this vein, of particular note is the issue "Batman's Greatest Boner." Please google it. #neverforget Miller was open in his disdain for the goofy, fun-loving Batman. He longed for the return of the violent vigilante that was showcased in the earliest issues of Detective Comics. So, after a string of successful work at Marvel, Miller made the jump to DC and penned what has become the ultimate Batman miniseries epic, defining the character for generations of writers to come: The Dark Knight Returns.

In this way, Miller created the definitive character voice, not just for Batman, but for the legion of antiheroes that were to follow. Miller presented a Batman only marginally saner than his villains. He spoke (and narrated) in pulp non sequiturs. From "You don't get it, boy. This isn't a mudhole... It's an operating table. And I'm the surgeon," to "The time has come. You know it in your soul, for I am your soul... You cannot escape me. You are puny, you are small, you are nothing--a hollow shell, a rusty trap that cannot hold me.

Smoldering, I burn you — burning you, I flare, hot and bright and fierce and beautiful. You cannot stop me, not with wine or

"YOU DON'T GET IT, BOY. THIS ISN'T A MUDHOLE... IT'S AN OPERATING TABLE. AND I'M THE SURGEON,"

Swampy was teaming up with DCU staples like Superman, Hawkman, the New Gods, and Adam Strange. He even rolled into Batman's home turf of Gotham City and trounced the Dark Knight himself! Of course, by this time, Batman had changed.

Which brings us to Frank. Frank Miller.

The 60s and 70s had found Batman, formerly the scowling pulp anti-hero who instilled fear into the hearts of the superstitious and cowardly, becoming the smiling authoritarian. With Robin the Boy (and Pantless) Wonder at his side, Batman's

Returns was a distinct anomaly inside and out. Just the plot of the series is pretty banay-nay: an aging, late 50s Bruce Wayne resumes the cape and cowl after years of retirement to battle an oppressive government, street gangs, an effeminate and lusty Joker, finally culminating in a brutal, no-holds-barred brawl with Superman.

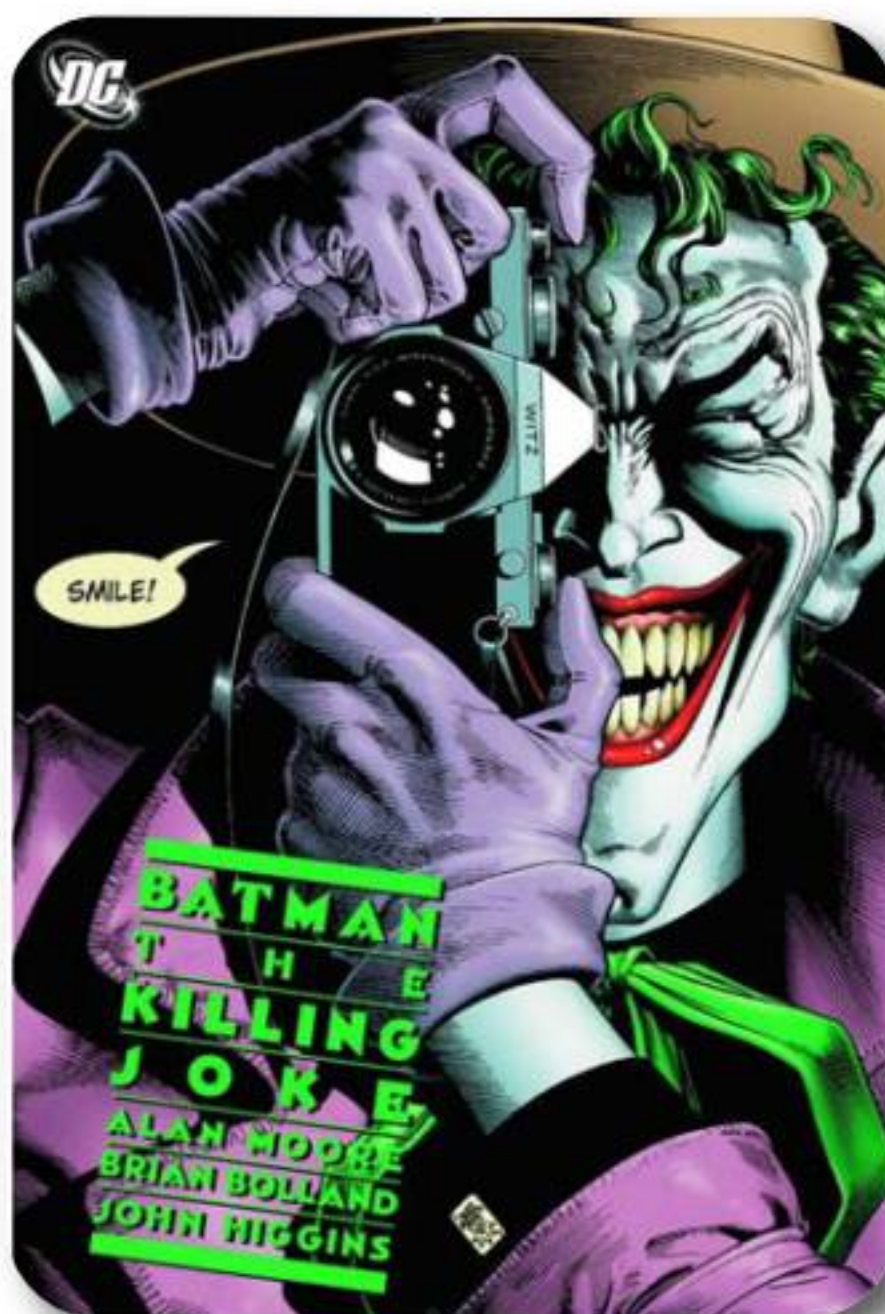
But more than the plot was the tone and characterization: Miller's Batman never smiled. He was a damaged psychotic anarchist, issuing every terse pronouncement through gritted teeth.

vows or the weight of age — you cannot stop me, but still you try. Still you run. You try to drown me out... But your voice is weak."

Batman ain't nuthin' to fuck with.

This characterization of Batman, while bold and iconic, would prove problematic to other comics. Suddenly, the hokey goofball heroes of old just seemed too safe.

A hero dedicated to truth, justice, and the American way could barely compete with Dirty Harry dressed up as a flying rat, pounding the shit out of government storm



troopers with his bare hands. THIS was a hero that appealed perfectly to the adolescent power fantasies of the teenage readers of the mid-80s.

The poverty and violence showed in TDKR was, quite intentionally, only a few steps away from the economic and political instability you might see on the news on the average day in 1985.

Comic books and their heroes thrive on the idea of audience relatability. The most effective heroes appeal to the readers as a fantasy that they can picture them-

before; hadn't been allowed to see. It was intoxicating. Here was a hero as angry and hormonal as they were! It was like being forced to listen to Pat Boone your whole life and then suddenly discovering Slayer.

One hopes that, as Miller was putting the finishing touches on the scene where Batman (aided by kryptonite and a badass robot suit) beats seven shades of shit out of a jingoistic, Ronald Reagan-worshipping Superman, that Frank solemnly muttered some lines from the Tibetan Book of the Dead. What seems more likely is that he attempted to hide his erection and called

rise of the antihero. DC, mortified at the idea that the Charlton heroes they'd just bought were going to be portrayed as psychologically damaged and morally dubious, stepped in and encouraged Moore to present the tale with "original" characters.

Captain Atom became the omnipotent and alien Dr. Manhattan. Blue Beetle became the impotent and pudgy Nite Owl. Peacemaker became the degenerate nihilist The Comedian.

And the Moral Objectivism of The Question was tweaked to justify the psychotic



selves as part of. (Which is why the single greatest gift you can give any comic book fan is one of those "YOU get to join the X-Men!" custom comics you could make at mall kiosks that include your graduation photos in a pre-Photoshop comic book adventure. Go ahead, get one for the comic book fan in your life. You can blame me.) Spider-Man is every 98 pound weakling dying for the chance to show that he can be a hero. Superman is the idealist's dream, a refutation of the idea that absolute power has to corrupt absolutely. Green Lantern is for little boys who like playing with jewelry. Hawkman has wings and shit.

Frank Miller's Batman was a true 80s pop idol: tough, uncompromising, ready to take on the world and knock its teeth through the back of its head. And to readers, this was a hero type they hadn't seen

out for yet another mountain of cocaine.

Alan Moore, from his secret lair atop a pile of Mad Magazines and licked acid tabs on the other side of the pond, observed this minor revolution that Miller was heading up and decided that this misanthropic libertarian shouldn't have all the fun.

Drawing a typewriter from the depths of his mighty beard, Moore set out to craft the perfect response/meditation on the Millerian antihero utilizing some scraps of intellectual property DC had acquired from the Charlton publishing group.

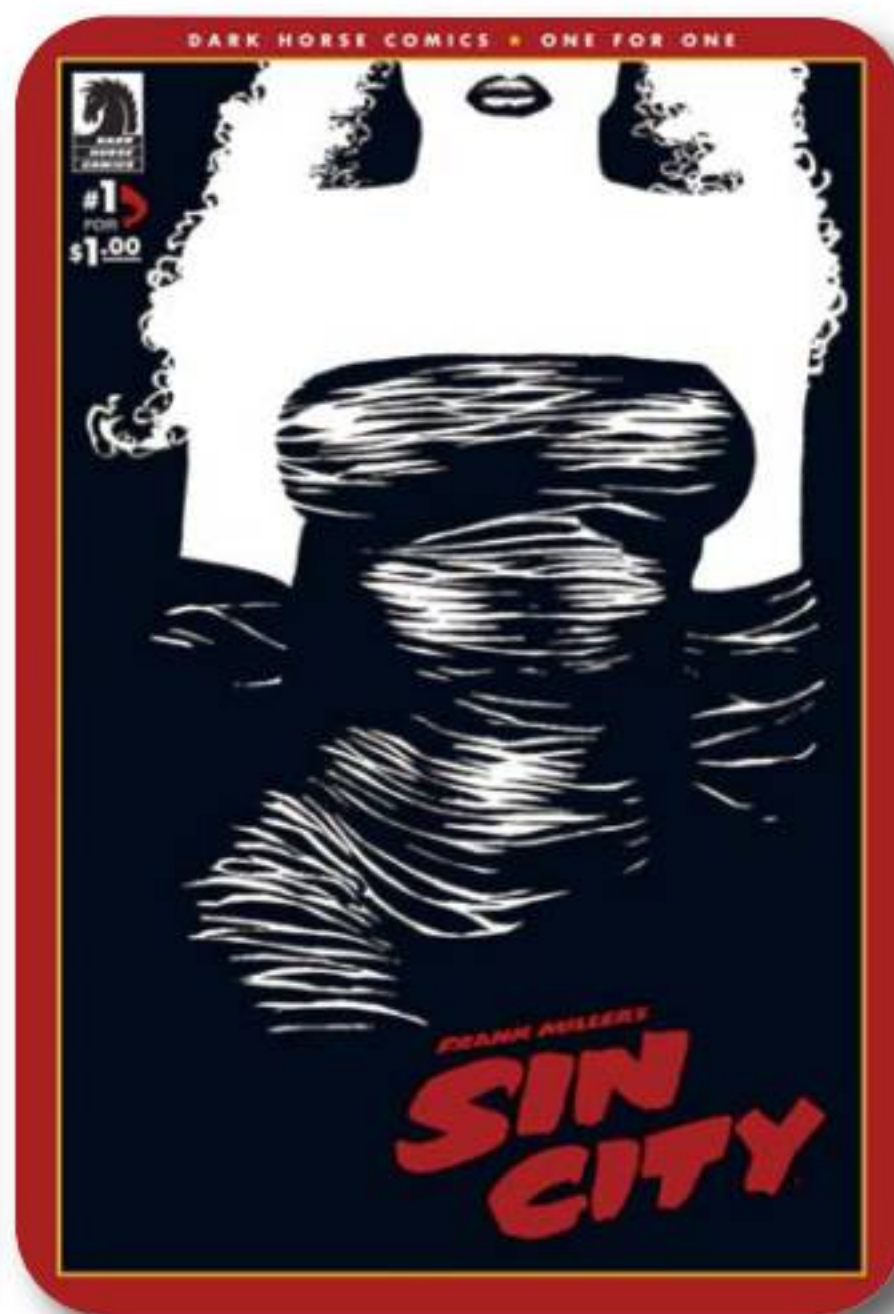
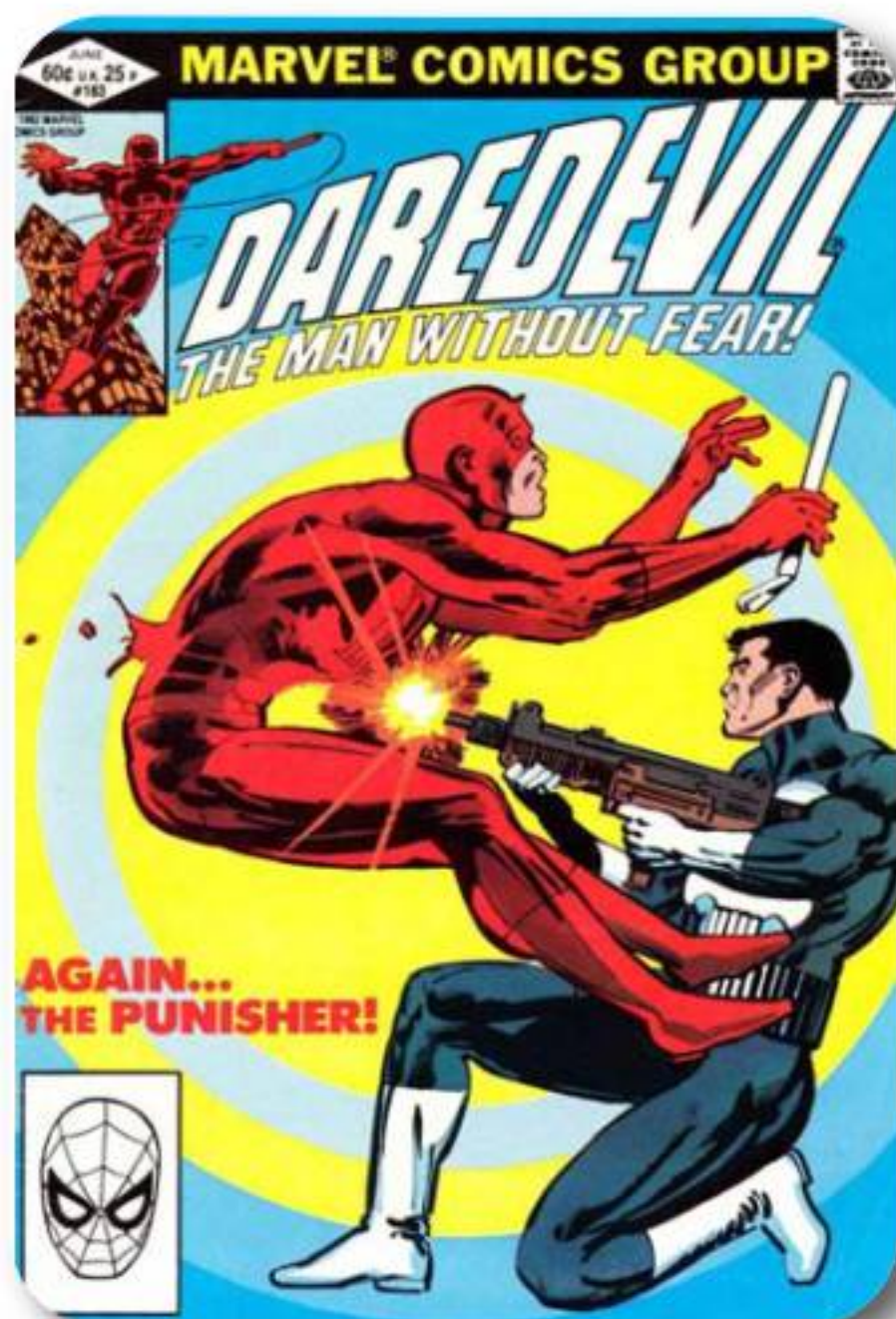
Starting with nobody's favorite heroes (The Blue Beetle, Captain Atom, The Question, Peacemaker), Moore crafted an epic deconstruction of the very idea of the comic book superheroes and the looming

absolutism of Rorschach.

The series (later the trade paperback, the "graphic novel," 2009 movie, and lunchbox available now at Hot Topic) was Watchmen. Perhaps you've heard of it. Now Watchmen gets a lot of credit, much of it due. It's dense, literate, and really raised the standard for the medium.

There's some big ideas, great characterization, stunning art by Dave Gibbons, and it's executed with a panache and artfulness that is still unparalleled. But it's also the kind of comic normal people (re: non-comic book reading) like to brag about reading when they're making their bold, idiotic distinctions between the comics they consider "literature."

It'll usually be the second illustrated book brought up by some hipster trying to



BOTH THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS AND WATCHMEN HAVE CREATED LEGACIES. CUMULATIVELY, THEY INVENTED AND POPULARIZED THE MODERN ANTIHERO IN COMICS.

sound cultured (preceded by Art Spiegelman's Maus and followed by Craig Thompson's Blankets) while they pontificate about whether or not Watchmen is a true "graphic novel." "Graphic novel," is, of course, the term normos like to use for comics so they don't feel like a man-child. It's like calling porn "erotica."

The books represent both creators at the height of their game; presenting compelling, postmodernist visions of the masked adventurer that was perfectly in linewith (in the case of TDKR) or a meditation on (Watchmen) the values of the 80s.

Both creators subsequently found themselves going through a period of creative exuberance before becoming industry outsiders due to their creative idiosyncrasies.

Miller's work continued to mine the "grim n' gritty" antihero, slowly stripping away the remaining scraps of their vulnerability until he decided to do a much maligned "prequel" to TDKR called All-Star Batman and Robin that had Batman announcing to everyone who would listen that He's the Goddamn Batman, much akin to how Cartman on South Park might say "Whatever, I do what I want!" Moore would continue to put out quality but increasingly fringe material, emerging once

every so often to complain about the most recent butchering of a his work, put out another volume of The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, and grind the bones of children who couldn't answer his three riddles.

Both The Dark Knight Returns and Watchmen have created legacies. Cumulatively, they invented and popularized the modern antihero in comics. Wolverine, Spawn, Venom, the Punisher: all characters that saw a major boost post Watchmen/ TDKR.

In all subsequent appearances, Batman himself has been presented as Frank Miller wrote him. Christopher Nolan's Batman series owes everything The Dark Knight Returns, including but not limited to Christian Bale's goofy Gob Bluth voice. And of course, there's the Watchmen movie.

Moore himself has been vocal about his disdain of Zach Snyder's blockbuster that managed somehow to be both astonishingly faithful to the source material and profoundly miss the point. Rorschach and the Comedian, Moore's loving and detailed deconstructions of the antihero, became bullet-time fighting badasses that guys couldn't wait to incorporate into their "quotes" section on Facebook. As the

meme goes, Alan Moore would be spinning in his grave right now. Except that he's not dead. He just sleeps in open graves.

Still, the legacy of these two's work marches on. Before Watchmen, a crass cash-in featuring stories about the Watchmen principles from (you guessed it) before the events of Watchmen, has just hit the shelves from DC comics. Nolan's outrageously successful Dark Knight series comes to a close this summer as The Dark Knight Rises evokes visions a gruff, weary Batman, hopelessly outgunned, facing a legion of terrorists and having to battle their hulking, menacing leader. Even the title seems poised to flick the bean of every comic book fan who has ever heard of little Frank (and hopefully wash visions of The Spirit out of their heads).

Will these two follow ups represent a valid continuation of the legacy of these epic tomes? Or will they simply pander to the masses looking to live vicariously through emotionally stunted tough-guys acting out their repressed psychosexual baggage through violence?

Who gives a shit? I'm more into Spider-Man anyway.



Bodacious and Bloodied: Horror's Great 8 Badass Women of the '80s

By Brian Solomon

Much has been made of the 1980s' monumental contribution to the history of the horror film genre, and with good reason. From slasher flicks and seedy exploitation to splatstick and the home video boom, there are so many ways in which the decade of Reagan and Run DMC made its mark.

However, one of the most overlooked contributions the '80s made to horror is the impressive influx of strong, kick-ass female roles. In fact, while the rest of the industry was lagging woefully behind (and still is), horror filmmakers were giving us some very memorable female characters, played by an array of beautiful, talented, and charismatic young actresses.

Typically, they are only lauded when people are writing about the so-called "final girl" phenomenon, but the importance of women in '80s horror goes far beyond that. The rise of the woman beyond scream queen fetishism had been brewing since the 1970s (see Gaylen Ross in Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*), but it was during the MTV era that they truly came into their own. And the genre has been made better for it.

Here's a look back at eight of the most unforgettable. History can have Steinem, Sanger, and Susan B. For horror fans, it's all about Ripley, Nancy, and Trash.



8. Dee Wallace

The Howling (1981), Cujo (1983), Critters (1986)

Although most likely best known as Elliott's mom in *E.T.*, Wallace made quite a name for herself as a horror/B-movie starlet in the 1980s as well. After establishing herself the previous decade with Wes Craven's *The Hills Have Eyes*, she followed it up in the '80s with Joe Dante's *The Howling*, then transitioned to somewhat *E.T.*-like mommy roles for the Stephen King adaptation *Cujo* and the *Gremlins* knock-off *Critters*. She has an enthusiastic cult following to this day, and deservedly so.



7. Ashley Laurence

Hellraiser (1987), Hellbound: Hellraiser II (1988)

Although only confined to one major role, Ashley Laurence cemented her position as one of '80s horror's classic scream queens, matching wits with Doug Bradley's Pinhead during the '80s in two installments of Clive Barker's surreal and gore-iffic *Hellraiser* series (she would also appear in 1992's *Hellraiser III: Hell on Earth*, as well as the 2002 direct-to-video chapter *Hellraiser: Hellseeker*). In the pantheon of horror's ultimate "Final Girls," the list is never complete without sweet Kirsty.



6. Amanda Pays

Leviathan (1989), The Kindred (1987)

She'd already be an '80s icon thanks to the *Max Headroom* TV series that first introduced her to American audiences. But the British actress only added to her strong association with the big-hair decade with two unforgettable horror appearances. Right around the time she was doing *Headroom*, Amanda also starred in *The Kindred*, a highly underrated bit of baby-horror. She followed that up with *Leviathan*, which stood with *The Abyss* and *Deep Star Six* amongst a rash of late '80s underwater monster flicks.





5. Lisa Wilcox

A Nightmare on Elm Street 4: The Dream Master (1988), A Nightmare on Elm Street 5: The Dream Child (1989)

"Welcome to Wonderland... Alice!" So intones Fred Krueger to one of his strongest protagonists, played by the beautiful Wilcox. Aside from Heather Langenkamp's Nancy, Wilcox's Alice became the most popular Elm Street kid. So much so that after her first appearance in Elm Street 4: The Dream Master, producers decided the character should return in Part 5. It was a good call—the latter Elm Street films lack much of the bite of the earlier ones, but Wilcox's strong presence helps keep them engaging.



4. Heather Langenkamp

A Nightmare on Elm Street (1984), A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: The Dream Warriors (1987), Shocker (1989)

Speaking of Nancy, the original Elm Street final girl is in many ways '80s horror's quintessential female protagonist: Resourceful, strong-willed, and more than a match for the monster that's chasing her. In short, a far cry from the fainting scream queens of earlier decades, who mainly served as victims to be rescued by male heroes. Nancy does her own rescuing, and has it far more together than her dazed and ditzy boyfriend, the future Captain Jack Sparrow.



3. Jamie Lee Curtis

The Fog (1980), Prom Night (1980), Terror Train (1980), Halloween II (1981)

Her greatest horror role, and the one for which she is most known, John Carpenter's Halloween, was released in 1978. However, the daughter of Janet Leigh and Tony Curtis rode the horror express right into the dawn of the new decade, peppering the very early '80s with an impressive string of fright flicks. Many consider her the most well-known modern scream queen, and for a brief time she was in some ways the face of the emerging slasher sub-genre.



2. Sigourney Weaver

Aliens (1986)

Yes, I'm ranking Ms. Weaver on the basis of one major horror appearance during the 1980s. When that one appearance is playing Ripley in James Cameron's Aliens, it carries a hell of a lot of weight. Weaver originated the character in Ridley Scott's atmospheric 1979 original, but in Cameron's big-budget, rock 'em sock 'em sequel, Ripley emerged as American cinema's first true female action hero. A seminal role in the history of women in the movies.



1. Linnea Quigley

Graduation Day (1981)
Silent Night, Deadly Night (1984)
The Return of the Living Dead (1985)
Creepozoids (1987)
Sorority Babes in the Slimeball Bowl-o-Rama (1988)
Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers (1988)
Night of the Demons (1988)

The list above represents just a thin slice of Linnea's mile-long resume of '80s horror. In terms of output, no one comes close. And while the quality of many of those films can easily be called into question, it's hard to dispute that Linnea Quigley was the 1980s horror chick. Poll any number of died-in-the-wool horror junkies, and you're likely to find that this is the first name that comes up when the subject of "Women of the '80s" is mentioned. For me and for many, her most memorable role would have to be the nihilistic and nubile Trash from Dan O'Bannon's brilliant *Return of the Living Dead*. A punk rock take on the classic scream queen, Quigley is a true product of the '80s, and its undisputed empress of horror.





The Art of **JASON EDMISTON**

www.jasonedmiston.com



JASON EDMISTON

ART, ART 'TIL YOU DROP...

Interview by Fallon Masterson, @scarsfallon

Horror fans know him for his posters, T-shirts, and magazine covers. And any other project that allows the busy and talented Jason Edmiston to showcase his brand of a brightly colored, and at times macabre, take on pop culture. It's playful and the subject matter often retro, but that doesn't mean Jason's work appears on only the usual, time-tested mediums. (You can even find his take on Bill Murray and Slimer on an iPhone cover.) He also doesn't stick to just one genre, and his Monsters of Rock series lets fans who may know Jason only for his movie posters see what Jason can do to 80s rock icons.

Part of our attraction to the 80s is how over-the-top so many things were. What's the appeal of the time period to you? So much of your work is "pop," from Monster Squad to your classic monster mash-up, but definitely the pop of yesteryears.

JASON EDMISTON: I think that the appeal of the 80s was the creativity when it came to concepts and character design. So much of today's entertainment is revisiting properties, and remaking old movies, musical styles, or whatever. The 80s was a period of great experimentation as far as pop culture is concerned. Robocop, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Thundercats, Glam Metal (and their mascots like Iron Maiden's Eddy), the Terminator...all of these things were wildly different than what we were used to seeing. The visuals and ideas behind them were incredibly creative and new at the time. It was a great era to try something wild, and out there, and a lot of the times, these ideas stuck around.





Do you think the idea of your *Monsters of Rock* series could work with contemporary musicians? Are there still “rockstars” today?

EDMISTON: I don't think too many of the new “rockstars” would translate as monster portraits. The current trend with these musicians is to downplay their image. There are a few Lady Gagas or Black Veil Brides, but for the most part, bands look like the audience. The musicians of today that would work are rockers that have been around for a while, coming from the past eras where image was just as important as the music: Rob Zombie, Kiss, Ozzy, Alice Cooper, etc.

Tell us about how you created the series.

EDMISTON: I started each one by picking a musician that was recognizable from their costume, or tattoos, or hair, because I was going to monsterize their faces to the point where they wouldn't look like themselves. I still wanted them to feel like the same people though. I then usually picked one or two press photos to base the paintings on, and proceeded to see how far I could take their features: noodle arms, slit eyes, giant wooden banana teeth. I kept just enough visual cues specific to these rockstars, so that their fans could still make them out. My initial sketches were only 4" x 5", then I blew them up to about 10" x 14", and tightened up the pencils. When I was happy with the character design, I scanned it in, and quickly painted a color rough in Photoshop. Then the pencils were blown up again, transferred to a 16' x 20" wood panel, and painted in acrylics.



We first heard about the series because of the way the internet and sites like BoingBoing really embraced the paintings from your show at the Photo Booth Gallery. What sort of feedback have you been getting?

EDMISTON: It's been incredibly positive. I just recently found out about a couple of other blogs that covered the series, including Juxtapoz.com. It's driven a lot of traffic to my site and store, and brought in a few new jobs as well. That's all I can hope for an image. To connect to the audience, and bring more eyes on my work, allowing me to keep working, creating more art!

In recent years, you're noted as being selected into *American Illustration*. Which pieces of yours were selected?

EDMISTON: I have gotten a few nice nods from *American Illustration* (in my opinion, one of the best and most respected art annuals in the world). Some of the accepted pieces were a zombie couple going to the prom, a portrait of Michael Jackson, merging his young self with his later plastic surgery years, and most recently, my portrait of Motley Crue's Tommy Lee as a rock n' roll monster.

It seems like we're in a kind of golden age right now of being able to find amazing prints online, and buy them straight from the artist through sites like Etsy. What's hanging on your walls right now?



EDMISTON: I've got quite a few prints from my favorite artist, most of them as trades since I also have a lot of artist friends. I've got Justin Erickson's Scarface poster for the Astor Theatre, Gary Pullin's Texas Nightmare print, Tyler Stout's Star Wars trilogy of posters, Ken Taylor's Planet of the Apes print, and a beautiful steampunk Darth Vader portrait by Rob Jones...among others!

You've had some killer shirts on Fright Rags -- Trick R' Treat



comes to mind. Any more collaborations currently in the works we can look forward to?

EDMISTON: I just finished a Mars Attacks piece, both a poster and T-shirt. It's super colorful. I hope to do many more projects for them in the future!

This summer, we've seen your work adorn Mondo's Conan poster for the Alamo Drafthouse. Where else will we be able to see new work and what projects are next?

EDMISTON: I've done a 10 image subset of Mars Attacks cards for the reissue of the original Topps cards (almost treated as "lost" art), I did the poster for a huge pop culture art gallery show in New York in

August, my Rob Zombie cover for HorrorHound should be out by the time this interview sees print, and I'm currently painting an album cover for a big horror-punk band I'm sure you're familiar with.

What to you is the, or some of the, quintessential 80s horror movies?

EDMISTON: My favorite 80's horror film? Gotta be the first Nightmare on Elm Street. Some of my other top picks: Creepshow, Near Dark, The Fly, Phenomena, Friday the 13th, Evil Dead II, Poltergeist, and Monster Squad, but the full list is much too long.

Keep up with Jason's work and learn more at www.jasonedmiston.com.

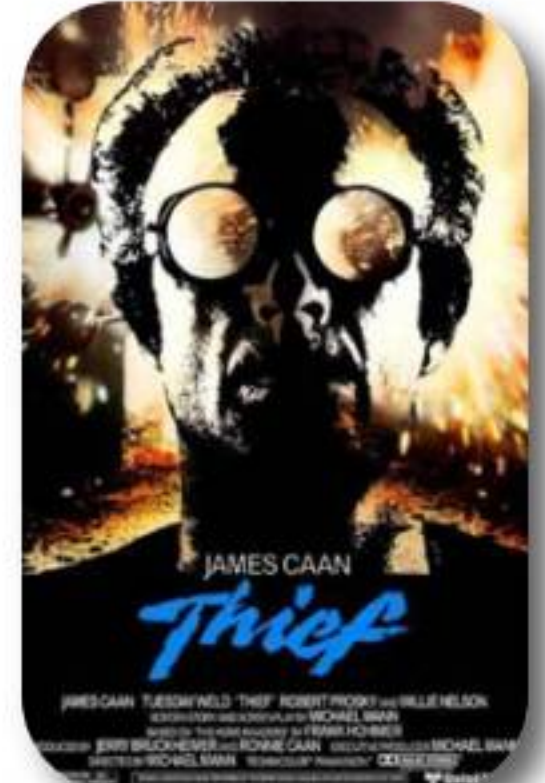
8 of the Manliest Man Movies of the 80s

by Hank Ironside, Advocate for True Men

Thief

1981, dir. Michael Mann, star. James Caan

Why it's so manly: Aside from the musical score by Tangerine Dream (which I find actually awesome), this is as hairy-chested a film as they come. In the 80s, action stars like Dolph and Arnold may have been larger than life with the ability to rip off your limbs, but it's James Caan's Frank that's the real manly deal: tough as nails, completely uncompromising, and following a code of duty so unrealistic by the standards of most modern men, that the HOLY SHIT ending to this film is completely logical for a True Man like Frank--he wouldn't have it any other way, and neither should we.



Blue Thunder

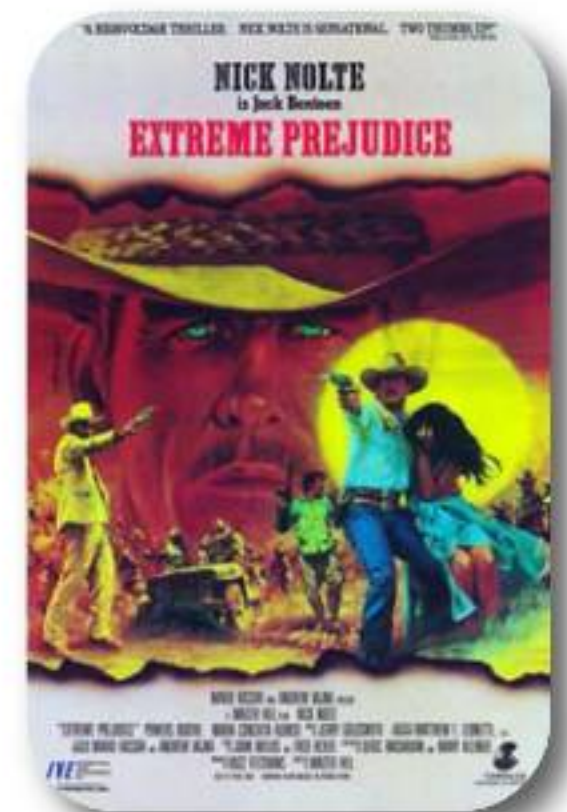
1983, dir. John Badham, star. Roy Scheider

Why it's so manly: The involvement of Warren Oates is reason enough to warrant this as a True Man movie, but it's a combination of Roy Schieder's badass portrayal of an ex-Vietnam Vet with PTSD, the completely over-the-top final showdown with Malcolm McDowell (where it seems like they take out half of Los Angeles), and the unexpected True Man ending that kicks this into Requisite True Man movie territory (spoilers ahead). After defeating Malcom McDowell in a game of Helicopter vs. Helicopter, Roy Scheider's character of Frank Murphy (another Frank!) decides to destroy the ultra-awesome helicopter, Blue Thunder, rather than let the technology get in the hands of anyone else. It's that kind of code, especially in the decade of Herr Reagan, that makes Blue Thunder so special -- Frank knows Blue Thunder kicks all sorts of ass, but he's also a True Man, and he'll do the right thing, even if YOU wouldn't.

Extreme Prejudice

1987, dir. Walter Hill, star. Nick Nolte

Why it's so manly: Don't even need to discuss the actual film. Walter Hill + Nick Nolte + Powers Boothe = INCREDIBLY MANLY. Walter Hill has remarked that, in one way or another, all his films are westerns, and--as a huge fan of Sam Peckinpah--he's rather adept at giving his better films a kind of raw, pure muscularity that someone like, say, Michael Bay could never pull off. "Extreme Prejudice" might be the very best of Walter Hill at his most manly: vicious dialogue, low gravelly voices, mustaches, in the West, bloody shootouts Sam Peckinpah style, and a story line where duty and honor are paramount. And with JOHN MELIUS as the writer, you simply can't go wrong. Sam Peckinpah would have been proud.



The Border

1982, dir. Tony Richardson, star. Jack Nicholson

Why it's so manly: Warren Oates + Jack Nicholson + Harvey Keitel + Music by Ry Cooder. Again, that really should be enough for you. What's so incredibly manly about this film isn't necessarily the plot (although it is pretty goddamned manly), but rather Jack Nicholson playing the good guy. Jack Nicholson was legitimately one of the requisite icons of 70s, anti-hero cinema, and while I love his portrayal of Bobby Dupea and 'Bad Ass' Buddusky as much as you do (*sounds of crickets chirping*), it always broke my heart that these characters were badass and manly...but also, unfortunately, men-children. "The Border" takes one of the most testosterone-fueled, ornery actors in all of cinema and puts him in the role of a True Man and for that fact alone, "The Border" is requisite viewing and manly beyond fuck. Again, Warren Oates is in this.

The Mosquito Coast

1986, dir. Peter Weir, star. Harrison Ford

Why it's so manly: Perhaps an odd choice for a manly film, but it's Harrison Ford's portrayal of Allie--a maniacal, ruthless professor that's willing to drag his entire family into his doomed vision, that elevates this film into necessary viewing for 80s manliness. I know what you're thinking: wouldn't that kind of character be a man-child at the extreme? Aren't these 'manly' choices of yours somewhat based on characters of code and duty? Maybe, but regardless of his actions, Allie does have a code and purpose, albeit in a completely transgressive fashion--and it's this deontological transgression, reaching towards the sky in complete abandon, competing with the very notion of humanity and God, that's as balls-to-the-wall TRUE MAN as you get. Harrison Ford has played some badasses, but Allie Fox would beat the living shit out of each and every one of them.



Escape from New York

1981, dir. John Carpenter, star. Kurt Russell

Why it's so manly: Of the more iconic characters in 80s action cinema, it's Kurt Russell's Snake Plissken that somehow appears--despite the getup and eye patch--the least cartoonish and most based around a set of principles. Snake might be an outlaw, but he's an outlaw due to injustice; although he might not like you, he'll always do the right thing in the end, and give credit where credit is due (Snake's final "fuck you" in the last sequence of this film is so gratifying, I think I watched it over ten times in a row when I first saw it). The iconic underdog, rebel, loner, and modern-day cowboy for sci-fi cinema, Snake Plissken stands head and shoulders above the rest of his 80s contemporaries—even the McClanes and Rambos of the world.. Also, this film features Adrienne Barbeau's MAJESTIC boobage. Get it on Blu-ray.

Tom Horn

1980, dir. William Wiard, star. Steve McQueen

Why it's so manly: Probably the manliest movie of the 1980s. Steve McQueen. Although the name today is more of a product adjective, Steve McQueen--the actor, the man--was True Man all the way: determined, focused, confident without pretension, giving without expecting thanks, and ruthless without being cruel. Tom Horn might very well be his climax of this archetype--a flawed man, but a man of conviction, purpose and bound to laws and principles bigger than himself. McQueen plays Horn in his usual, idiosyncratic, quiet way, calling attention to the strength of this character in the seemingly insignificant details; in the empty spaces. McQueen made a wise move and went for a completely untraditional ending in this untraditional Western, but an ending that will resonate with any True Man. Steve McQueen died the same year this film was released, and watching Tom Horn, you both see a character--as well as the actor--that are one in the same. Required viewing for any True Man.



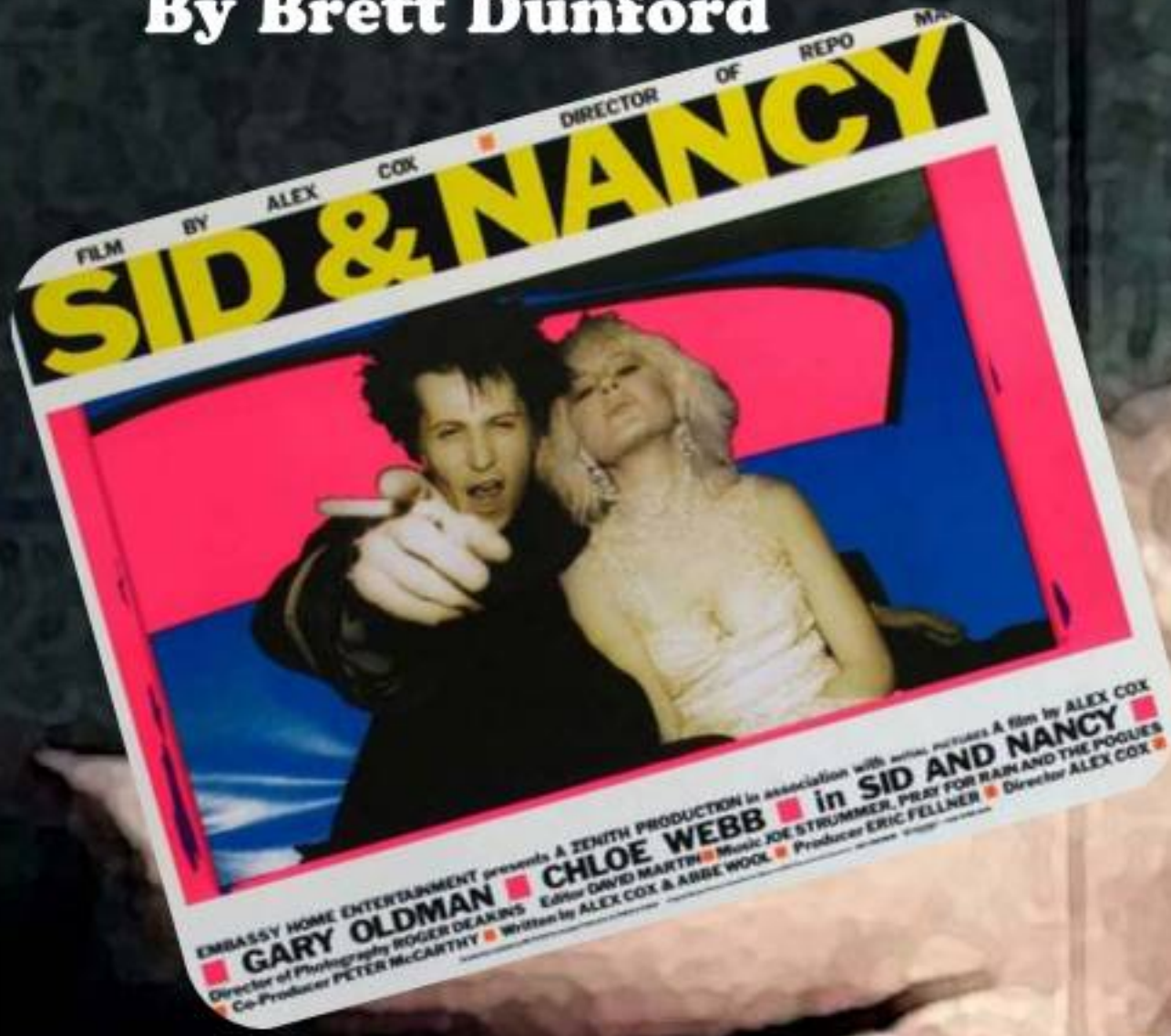
The Package

1989, dir. Andrew Davis, star. Gene Hackman, Tommy Lee Jones

Why it's so manly: The story is an interesting thriller, but—it's all the ingredients involved here that make it a seriously ass-kicking manly film: Gene Hackman, Tommy Lee Jones, Pam Grier, Dennis Franz, and Reni Santoni round out the cast, while Andrew Davis makes his most kick-ass film next to "The Fugitive" and "Under Siege." It also takes place--and is filmed--in gritty, late 1980s Chicago. No need to describe it beyond that--if you're not already searching for a copy of this fine film, just go sign up for a blog and move to Portland and get the whole transformation over with already. "The Package" is a True Man litmus test if there ever was one.

SID & NANCY: LOVE NEVER DIES

By Brett Dunford



There are many films made in the eighties that I could write about. *Aliens*, *Blue Velvet*, *To Live and Die in L.A.*, *Wall Street*; the list goes on. Had Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* been released one year later, you would be reading an entirely different article. However, there is one film from that fabulous decade that caps it all off for me. A film which tackles an important part of rock history, not just one that's close to my heart but also connected to my hometown of Bromley in Kent. Step forward *Sid & Nancy*, directed by Alex Cox.

I have several reasons for liking *Sid & Nancy* so much. First off, I was totally dedicated to punk in secondary school and was/still am a Sex Pistols fan of the highest order. Secondly, I felt my ties with the movie ran deeper than usual because of living in Bromley, which was the birthplace of the Bromley Contingent – the infamous spiky-topped followers of the Pistols – who later spawned artists of their own, such as Billy Idol and Siouxsie Sioux.

Lastly, I loved Sid Vicious most of all. No question about it. As Bromley is a stone's throw from neighboring Lewisham in

Southeast London, where he was born, I've met some interesting characters along life's path. One or two have regaled me with stories of his early days; how he was just a normal kid that joined a famous band and became a self-destructive moron. Regardless of the anarchic transformation he underwent, Vicious remains the quintessential classic punk rock star.

In 1984, I started attending the Ravensbourne School in Hayes Lane, Bromley. It was the best thing that ever happened in my life and has made me the person I am today. Naturally, I didn't realize this at the time. Billy Idol was a student too back in

the late seventies. Going to that school made me feel even closer to my heroes and somehow related to the musical explosion that occurred eight years prior.

While I was already listening to punk by the time I started at Ravensbourne, the new kids I met gave me the confidence to express it. It was almost like Class of Nuke 'em High: outlandish hairstyles, classroom riots, and students dominating lessons from the teachers. We looked forward to music class most of all because it was a chance to bring in our punk mix tapes and discuss them. Our tutor encouraged the love we had for the movement

and even arranged for us to have guitar lessons every Thursday by Ed Speight of the Blockheads. How can one not get sucked into it all?

I felt like I was destined to follow punk forever. It was everywhere I turned: on the radio, in the stores, boutiques, markets, records and magazines. The BBC even made a television comedy sitcom called *The Young Ones*, which was about four punk-types living in a student squat in London. Every kid in school, dope and genius alike, were giving each other the finger and yelling “YOU BASTARD!” in the playground. It was great!

Clearly, Britain was still suffering from punk fever six years after it subsided, and I have nothing but fond memories of that time. Unfortunately, I ended up getting suspended for a DIY Mohawk haircut and my best friend was also sent home one morning for sewing a confederate flag into his blazer. It was never meant disrespectfully but we knew we were breaking the rules. I think this is essentially what punk was about. If I had to encapsulate it, it was a well-timed and heartfelt practical joke on the music scene that ultimately backfired on itself.

Then 1986 arrives and Sid & Nancy drops on me like a bomb. I was already dying to get my grubby mitts on it and feasted on whatever promotional scraps the television and newspapers would provide. One of our gang even had a “shit-cam” style bootleg two weeks ahead of release.

Until then, the only thing anyone had in the way of official Pistols home video was Julien Temple’s 1979 mockumentary, *The Great Rock ‘n’ Roll Swindle*, and Lech Kowalski’s *D.O.A.: A Right of Passage*. I think it’s fair to say that expectations were pretty high for me and my friends. Sadly, I was a just a baby-faced thirteen-year-old, so it would be some years later that I finally got to see Sid & Nancy in its theatrical glory.

When production wrapped on his previous

film, *Repo Man*, English filmmaker Alex Cox wanted to continue with the theme of punk for a second film. He initially had plans to shoot an original script called *Too Cool to Die*, using the rise and fall of a rock singer as the basic template. After a failed attempt to get it off the ground, Cox read Lester Bangs’ now-legendary article on Sid Vicious and Nancy Spungen in the *Village Voice* entitled “A Tale of Two Patsies,” and it left such an impression on him that he rethought the project altogether and decided to do a new screenplay about the two punk icons.

Sid Vicious, real name Simon John Beverley, was the bassist for legendary punk group, the Sex Pistols. On the night of his



first performance with the band, he met American groupie Nancy Laura Spungen, who had initially pursued Heartbreakers drummer Jerry Nolan from New York to London. When her advances were spurned, she focused her sights on the Pistols. Within only a few weeks, she and Vicious fell into a highly co-dependent relationship. Both were addicted to heroin and prone to violent outbursts in public. Their shenanigans were documented frequently in the British press, inspiring the media to officially coin Spungen “Nauseating Nancy.”

After the ill-fated American tour of 1978, the Pistols’ split left the doomed duo to their indulgences. With a lot of free time and money on their hands, Vicious and Spungen packed their bags and flew to New York, where they lived for roughly

six weeks, until Spungen was found dead from a stab wound in Room 100 of the infamous Chelsea Hotel in October of the same year. Vicious was subsequently arrested and detained at Riker’s Island prison. He took his own life three months later at the young age of twenty-one.

The events of what happened at the Chelsea are not firmly established and many in the Pistols camp believe that Vicious was not guilty of Spungen’s murder. My friend and fellow writer Alan Parker tried to uncover the mystery with his acclaimed documentary, *Who Killed Nancy*, in 2009, which brought to light a new suspect, whose name was dropped by some of the interviewees. This has grown additional branches in the puzzle and if you want my lengthy personal investigation, I’m afraid it’ll have to wait for a future issue.

These things were unknown back in the eighties and, although the story was still fresh in everybody’s minds, solid information was surprisingly light. Work on the movie crawled to begin with but when Cox heard that another project was in the pipeline, he drafted screenwriter Abbe Wool to help him with the script. Cox said in an interview: “There was going to be a Hollywood film made about Sid and

Nancy starring Madonna and Rupert Everett, and I felt that it was my duty to prevent that from happening at all costs.”

With the working title of *Love Kills*, a team was quickly assembled to get it off paper and onto screen. Forced to market it as an anti-drug film to procure funding, Cox hired consultants and fired out scripts to the real people involved. One of his first ports of call was Vicious’ mother, Anne Beverley, who was not only using smack herself but highly protective of her son’s memory.

At the time, Alan Parker was staying with Beverley while researching for his first book on Sid Vicious and was present when she got the call from producers. Earlier this year, on a rainy night in Soho, he told me the following: “She says to me, ‘Who

the fuck is Alex Cox?’ The only Alex Cox I’d ever heard of is the bloke who made Repo Man. I suggested that we should meet up with him and we did. Cox comes in and asked me who I was. I told him I was ‘Miss Beverley’s representative.’ We got on alright. He told me he was going to make a film about the Pistols but wanted to focus more on Sid.”

Beverley and Parker were recruited as consultants on Love Kills, along with numerous Pistols alumni, notably members of the Bromley Contingent and original bassist Glen Matlock. Up-and-coming British actor Gary Oldman landed the role of Sid, and American actress Chloe Webb was cast as Nancy, fending off twenty-one-year-old Courtney Love to the part, whose audition impressed Cox so much that he wrote a minor character especially for her.

The budget was set at four million dollars and to be filmed on location in London, Paris, and New York. “Glen Matlock calls me and we all met with Cox,” Parker elaborates. “Anne had a naff dress sense but was okay. Fast forward a few months later and I’m in a caravan in the far north with Gary and Chloe! We all went to a bar after the scene where Sid and Wally walk down the street. This guy goes up to Gary and says, ‘Oi! Ain’t you dead?’ Gary just looked at him and went ‘ROAR!’”

Oldman was a regular on the stage circuit and had acted in a number of plays throughout the late seventies and early eighties to high critical acclaim, including The Massacre in Paris, Cain and Abel, and Entertaining Mr. Sloane. It was an appearance at the Royal Court Theatre, while performing in Edward Bond’s The Pope’s Wedding, that he caught the eye of Cox in 1984. As Love Kills was his first leading role in a movie, Oldman threw himself into it heart and soul. In fact, he existed solely on a diet of steamed fish, melon, and water to lose weight, which led to him being hospitalized mid-way into shooting.

More troubles hit when a film company already using the Love Kills title filed a lawsuit against Cox, and he changed the name to Sid & Nancy. Despite these hassles, the director ensured that making the film was as relaxed and professional as possible. “We were incredibly lucky because we were working for Eric Fellner



and Margaret Matheson,” said Cox. “She was very experienced, did a lot of television, and was head of Zenith, the film production company. Eric was a first time producer but he had done so many [music] videos and to jump from a small film to a big film wasn’t a problem for him. We didn’t have to deal with any focus groups or anything like that. It was magnificent.”

Instead of strictly following facts, Cox felt the easiest thing was for the actors to play fictionalized versions of their characters. He adopted the same approach in the film-making process too, thus crafting a punk fairytale instead of a straightforward biopic. This decision polarized some audiences.

The highlight is arguably Oldman’s rendition of “My Way,” which was shot at an old movie theatre in London. Beverley and Parker were both there to observe and, after many months protesting against the film, Beverley finally put her demons to rest. When she saw Oldman onstage singing the song, she was so convinced he was the right actor that she gave him her

son’s padlock and chain to wear for the rest of the shoot.

Sid & Nancy was released through Samuel Goldwyn in November 1986 to positive reviews but only made little more than half its budget. Naturally, this has not stopped the film from gaining a cult following and charting in many Top 100 movie lists in recent years. Critic Roger Ebert wrote in his review: “Why should anyone care about two scabrous vulgar-ians? Because the subject of a really good movie is sometimes not that important. It’s the acting, writing, and direction that count. If a movie can illuminate the lives of other people who share this planet with us and show us not only how different they are but, how even so, they share the same dreams and hurts, then it deserves to be called great. If you have an open mind, it is possibly true that the less you care about Sid Vicious, the more you will admire this movie.”

Through the eyes of a thirteen-year-old punk, Sid & Nancy scored a direct hit on every target. I could quote a vast percent-

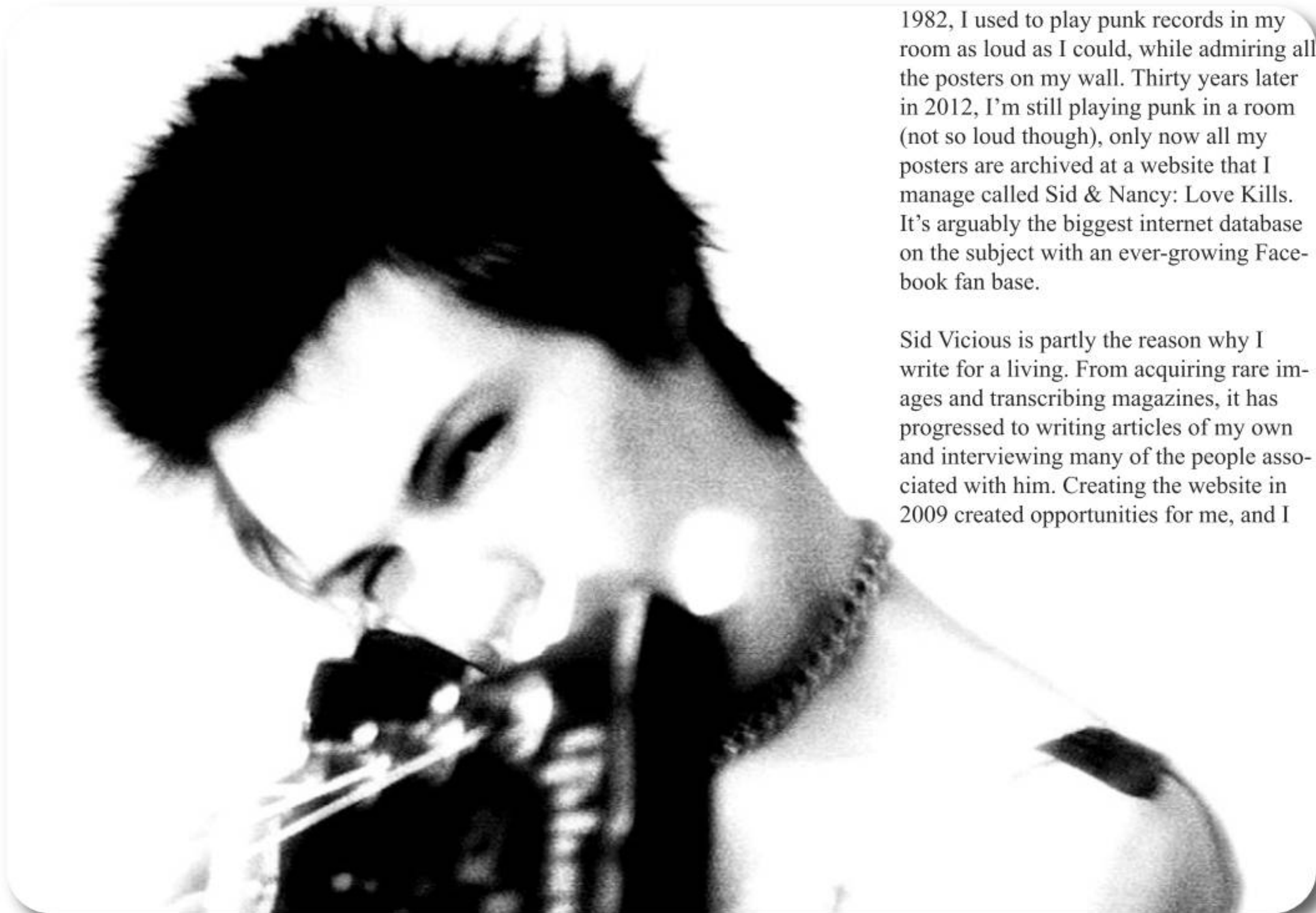
age of the film after only a few viewings. There’s something about the fast-paced comic book style that makes it a true contender in my eyes.

The soundtrack is first rate too, with original tracks by ex-Clash front man Joe Strummer, The Pogues, and Pray for Rain. I hope that a fully comprehensive CD set will be released one day, as a number of songs were recorded but not used in the finished product. Ramones favorite “And I Don’t Want to Live This Life” was originally intended for the movie, along with an unreleased title track by Glen Matlock.

The real meat of the piece is Gary Oldman, which is not surprising considering he is one of the most respected actors of this generation. It’s not about nailing the looks or the accent in this case; it’s about taking a role and making it your own - putting one’s hallmark on it, if you will. He absorbs the part and becomes it, especially during the grittier scenes depicted in the second half of the film.

I guess you could say I’m not a whole lot different from the Brett back then. In 1982, I used to play punk records in my room as loud as I could, while admiring all the posters on my wall. Thirty years later in 2012, I’m still playing punk in a room (not so loud though), only now all my posters are archived at a website that I manage called Sid & Nancy: Love Kills. It’s arguably the biggest internet database on the subject with an ever-growing Facebook fan base.

Sid Vicious is partly the reason why I write for a living. From acquiring rare images and transcribing magazines, it has progressed to writing articles of my own and interviewing many of the people associated with him. Creating the website in 2009 created opportunities for me, and I





stay in touch with the people I have interviewed, like Alan Parker, underground cable television guru Efrom Allen, and writer Teddie Dahlin, who just released her account of the whirlwind romance she had with Vicious in July 1977 called *A Vicious Love Story*.

A decade after the release of the movie, rumors of deleted scenes started flying around. I had certainly heard underground whispers of an hour-long improvised outtake with Oldman and Webb at the Chelsea Hotel, among others. "Tell me about it!" says Parker. "There's a Jubilee street scene where Wally gets his head kicked in. Where is it? And I know it exists because I saw the rushes." So far, none of these outtakes have surfaced.

Do I know anything about the movie that isn't out there? Well, if I was to start spinning yarns about Sid & Nancy, this article would probably continue for another page or two. I could tell you the story of how the actor Andrew Schofield met up with his character, John Lydon, and ended up on a drinking session that lasted a whole weekend and culminated in near-fisticuffs at a bar in New York. Or perhaps the story of how Guns N' Roses showed up as extras in one scene but later walked off the set out of boredom.

I think the best one comes from Parker, who had arranged an interview with Beverley at her home in promotion of the film. This was roughly six years after Sid's death. She had gone out grocery shopping while the crew set up their equipment and one of the guys asked Parker if he could help himself to the jar of peanut butter in the fridge, as he had not eaten in some time. Of course, he was told that it would be okay and that Beverley probably wouldn't mind.

Sometime later, Beverley returned and un-

loaded her groceries. Just as the interview was starting, she took Parker to one side and asked him if he knew where her son's peanut butter was. This threw him a little and for a moment he pondered the possibility that the poor woman was still buying food for her dead son. When he informed her that one of the crew was hungry and helped himself to it, her face suddenly turned pale: "You do know that was Sid's peanut butter, don't you? It was one of the very last things he bought in New York before he died. I was saving it as a keepsake..."

We laughed around the table of the Spice of Life pub in Soho, after Alan told me that story. I asked him about the guy who had eaten the peanut butter. "I'm telling you, Brett," chuckled Parker. "The geezer phoned me later that night and told me he had stomach cramps and was shitting through the eye of a needle!"

ALEX COX is a movie director and documentarian, best known for the films 'Repo Man', 'Sid & Nancy' and 'Straight to Hell'. He recently directed a well-received sequel to 'Repo Man', 'Repo Chick', in 2009, and currently teaches filmmaking at the University of Boulder in Colorado.

ALAN PARKER is a three-time biographer of Sid Vicious and two-time biographer of the Sex Pistols, who has also written books on The Clash, The Who, John Lennon and porn actress Traci Lords. He directed the well-received documentary film 'Who Killed Nancy', and was nominated for an Emmy for his film on Monty Python, 'Always the Truth'.

BRETT DUNFORD is a freelance writer who has contributed articles and fiction to a few publications over the years. He manages a website dedicated to Sid Vicious and Nancy Spungen called 'Sid & Nancy:



Love Kills' and is presently a correspondent for *Scars* magazine.

Photo credits:

-Alan Parker photos: London, 2012. © Clair Hart

-Sid Vicious Photo: Sweden, 1977. © Dennis Morris

-Nancy Spungen Photo: London, 1978. © Steven Emberton

EXTENDED PLAY

A Brief Introduction to the Video Game Films of the '80s, the Decline of the Arcade, and the Rise of the McWhiteboy.

by Jonathan Plombon

1. "Extended Play" and Video Games as Our Enemies

In the 1980s, filmmakers began sneaking into every two-bit arcade, passing by throngs of Donkey Kong hustlers downing shots of Pepsi to find the next great film prop, supporting character, and lead villain. They found them. And by finding them, they also founded the video game film genre. Today these movies serve as time capsules holding our decades-old excitement of glaring into a pixel-filled monitor for the first time and wondering, "What is this?" But they also remind us of who we were, what we were, and what we wanted when we'd slip that quarter into the machine and push start.

One of the earliest examples of the genre began in 1979 when student filmmaker David Casci started production on his short film, "Extended Play," a 12-minute, lighthearted look at an arcade brimming with slapstick, "Looney Tunes"-like visual gags. What started with the simple premise of seeing what would happen if the game fought back unintentionally turned into a forerunner, and at times an archetype, for the genre. While it may not have directly influenced many of the future video game films, "Extended Play" managed to introduce characters, villains, and themes that would later be utilized in movies like "Nightmares" and "Wargames." It was ahead of its time. But then again, it had to be.

"At the time video games had not, other than 'Pong,' really hit," Casci says. "There were video game parlors and mostly it was still pinball machines... I think what inspired us was the pre-video game games. You could play them like you were flying a helicopter. They were basically a projection onto a rear screen, an opaque screen, and it was usually something like a disc, maybe a spinning disc, that had some images — it was more like a slide."

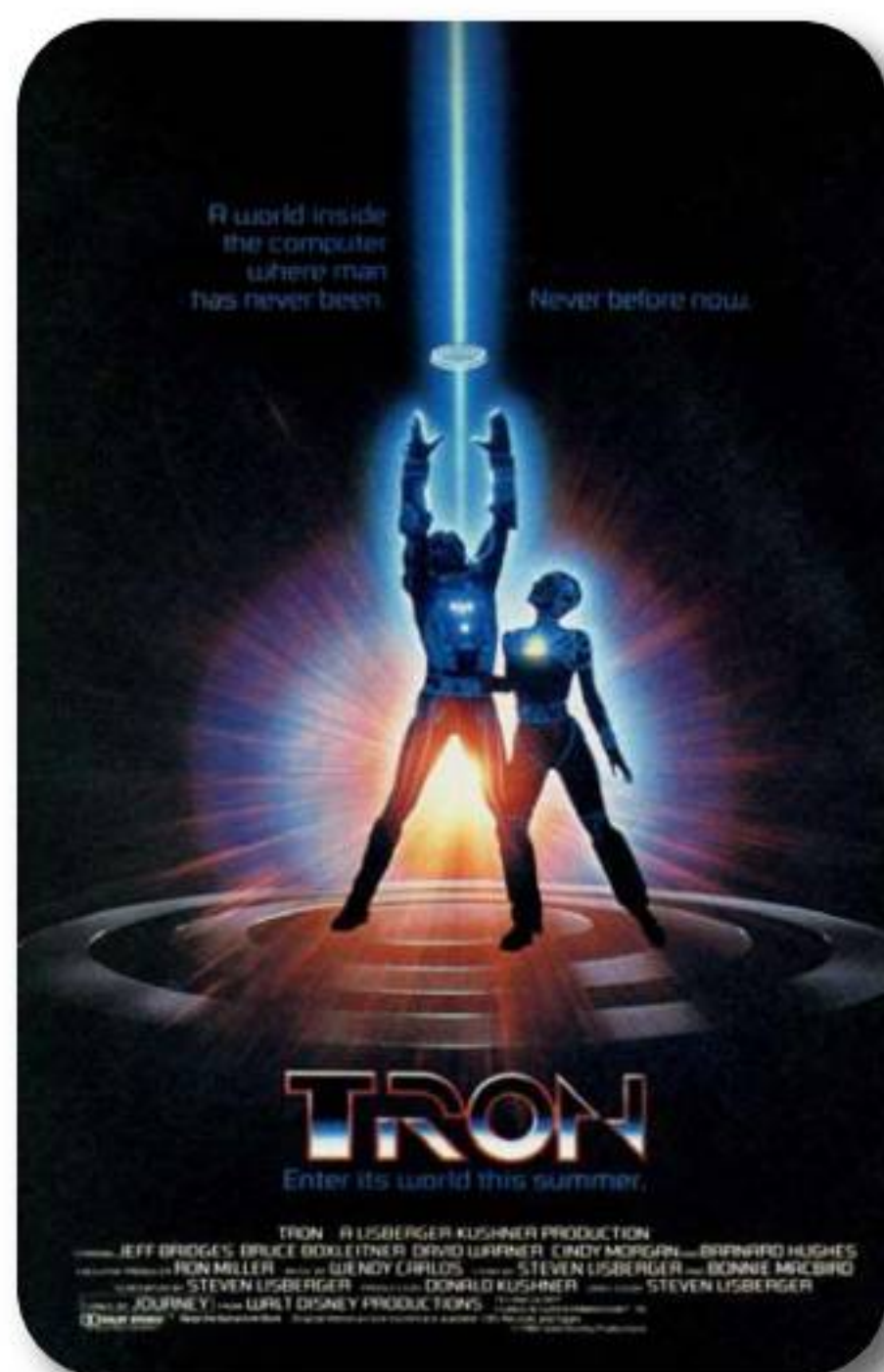
But the possibilities for the games are where Casci and his crew found another life, or perhaps another token, for "Extended Play."

"There weren't really video games yet so when we were making our movie, we were kind of looking at the future of what video games would be," he remembers.

"Extended Play" (which was partially shot in Atari's game room) tells the story of what would become the genre's prototypical antihero: a geeky Caucasian male, who this time is aptly named "Nerdly McWhiteboy" (John Pierce). He stumbles throughout the mall without an ounce of grace, blatantly staring at the cleavage of the female ice cream parlor employee named Dee Dee Dippenscoop (Vicki Piper, who receives second billing) and slipping on the floor while making a clumsy pass at two women. Unlucky at everything, he turns to the mall's arcade where he drowns his sorrows in the bottomless coin slot of a giant, villainous flight simulator named Mig Alley. The machine ends up attacking him, racking up its own points by firing at other patrons like old women in wheelchairs and children trying to grab handfuls of tokens from a seemingly deceased man. As the carnage continues, McWhiteboy ejects from his seat, where he ends up stuck in the ceiling with his parachute opened but of little use with his head thrust into the next floor.

The McWhiteboy, an otherwise passive individual whose only success comes from being planted alone in front of television monitor for hours at a time, reappeared often. McWhiteboys are without the temptations of popularity and social interaction. They're nerds and social misfits. They're the typical virgins (such as in "Extended Play" and "Hollywood Zap!"), sympathetic poor kids (like in "The Last Starfighter" and "The Wizard"), and angry youths ("Nightmares").





In some ways, those McWhiteboys aren't that far from the filmmakers.

"You know, we were kids. ['Extended Play'] was very adolescent. You can see all the silly sexual innuendo and stuff like that. It was what kids who aren't getting any do (laughs). You make things. So that's what we did," Casci says. "I think the original teaser was 'Unlucky in Love.' In fact, our working title was 'It's Cheaper than Sex.' Kids who are involved more socially in the world don't make movies in their garage (laughs)."

And they don't play endless amounts of video games. In "The Last Starfighter," Alex Rogan (Lance Guest) is somewhat socially blessed (he has a girlfriend), but he's poor, alienating him from the remaining clique of his wealthier peers. He lives in a trailer park where he works as a handyman. In his sparse free time, Alex plays the game "Starfighter." He's a McWhiteboy by financial inferiority.

It's much the same case for J.J. Cooney (Emilio Estevez), the obsessed punk in "Nightmares." In the second story, "The Bishop of Battle" featured in the "Tales from the Crypt"-styled film, J.J. is obsessed with beating The Bishop, an arcade game with "thirteen increasingly harder levels." Much of the arcade is behind him (including Frank Zappa's kid, Moon Unit), but he's a complete social deviant. Skipping school, headphones blaring Suicidal



Tendencies and his parents emotionally absent, Cooney finds purpose only in the arcade and in defeating Bishop. He's the anti-authority McWhiteboy, venturing out to the arcade after its closing to finally reach the rumored level 13 ("I heard some kid out in Jersey made it twice," Cooney insists).

But the McWhiteboy wouldn't be the only character from "Extended Play" to show up in other films. The game itself, Mig Alley, spoke to our fear of technology, so much so that it would haunt us again.

"Arcade Attack," a 24-minute short film from Mike Wallington from 1982, begins as a documentary on the growing trend of video games complete with interviews from an Elvis-obsessed pinball enthusiast and a "Defender" player who describes how playing the games figuratively turns him into a space ship. However, the movie changes fifteen minutes in when a crop "Space Invader" aliens leap out of a television set and join an army of other creatures to attack the real world. They're multiple Mig Alleys.

Possibly the most disturbing of the Mig Alley reincarnations is the aforementioned Bishop from the 1983 anthology film, "Nightmares." In it, J.J. breaks into the arcade and reaches the elusive and rumored 13th level. The accomplishment causes the game to literally fall apart. The Bishop emerges from the wreckage while J.J.,



armed with only the game's gun, engages in a light show duel with his nemesis throughout the mall. Much like in "Extended Play" and "Arcade Attack," the game mercilessly chases its human opponent to his all-too-real defeat.

One of the most highly regarded video games films, "Tron" toyed with the same ideas. When Kevin Flynn (Jeff Bridges) is abducted into a computer where he's forced to play a series of deadly games, he convinces the computer's programs to rise up against the cruel Master Control Program (David Warner).

Arguably the most dangerous Mig Alley is "Global Thermonuclear War" in "Wargames." When brainy slacker David Lightman (Matthew Broderick) accidentally hacks into the Government, he almost causes a massive launch of missiles and bombs from the United States to hit the Soviet Union and cause World War 3. "Wargames" is a unique Mig Alley, a game portrayed as having, or at least programmed with, rational. He's a Mig Alley that allows the McWhiteboy to leave instead of throwing him headfirst into the ceiling.

But, obviously, the original Mig Alley didn't. And audiences were finally getting a chance to see it. Although completed in 1981, Mig Alley and the entire "Extended Play" had to wait until 1982 to hit the festival circuit. After every catered pizza and

soda was ate and slurped, the film's budget would come up to roughly \$20,000. It was worthwhile. The crowds were amazed by the special effects from the small film even when bigger budgeted fare like "Tron" stole glances in theaters.

"When I was working on a Moviescope, which is like a little screen when you're doing editing, and I was running the film through it, some of the other the other students kept coming behind me and looking at it, wondered where I got the footage. They thought it was real fighter footage. I thought, 'Well, that's good. That works (laughs),' " Casci says.

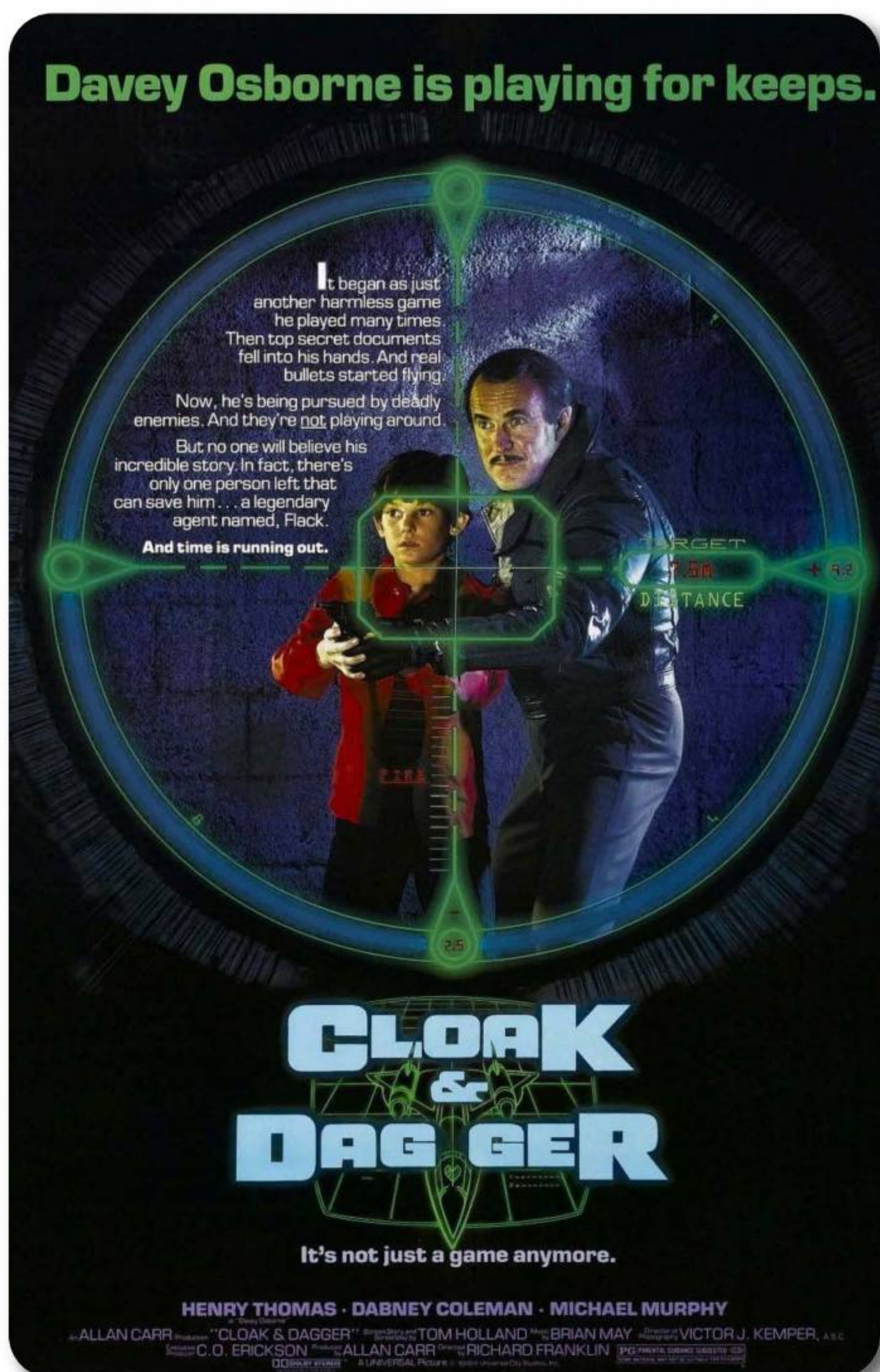
They were all models, hollow pipes, and optical fibers. The pinball machines and video games that were shattered by the machine's bullets were also all built by the crew. But those pipes and fibers wound up earning "Extended Play" over 80 awards including a blub in the Encyclopedia Britannica that year. It was later included on "Mutant Video," an off-the-wall VHS anthology, and played on premium channels such as HBO. It still finds an audience, even recently playing before a screening of "King of Kong" in Santa Monica, CA.

Since then, Casci has written children's books such as "The Odd Ms. Bodkins and the Big Crunch" and penned scripts like "The Pagemaster" and "Severed Ties." He's also lent his talents to companies such as Mindscape, Subaru, Howard Johnson, Purdue Farms, Colgate-Palmolive, and others. But he also remains as one of the first filmmakers to bring the computer screen to the silver screen.

2. "Joysticks" and the Arcade Melting Pot

In 1983, filmmaker Greydon Clark ("Satan's Cheerleaders," "Black Shampoo") attended a special test screening for his upcoming film "Wacko" in San Antonio, Texas. Upon entering the multiplex, Clark noticed a crowd of teenagers huddled around a vibrant swirl of color shooting from a few computer screens. It was an arcade.

"I walked into the lobby and over to the left was a long line of young men. And I wondered what the hell they were doing over there, giving free popcorn away or what?" Clark recalls. "So I



walked over and there were two video games in the lobby of this theater and there were guys standing in line with quarters in their hand, waiting for the guy in front of them to lose the game so they could move up."

It was the first video game he had ever seen.

"I thought, 'My God, what is this?' so I kind of hung around the game for a while. And I realized, 'Boy, tell you what, I could

make a movie based around a video game," Clark says.

Greydon Clark's "Joysticks" turned out to be the first of the '80s video game films to deemphasize our fears. We didn't have to worry about the technology. Instead arcades could become churches that housed a likeminded community of players together. Regardless of our background, we'd find our support and our friends among a few spent quarters.

"Joysticks" is teenage sex comedy focused on camaraderie. No matter how different we are, Clark's film suggests, we all play

the same machines and we're all interested in whoopie. When local businessman Joseph Rutter (Joe Don Baker) starts hassling hot stuff arcade owner Jefferson Bailey (Scott McGinnis), Bailey recruits his "Animal House"-inspired friend Jonathan Andrew McDorfus (Jim Greenleaf), extreme McWhiteboy Eugene Groebe (Leif Green), and Rutter's own valley-girl daughter, Patsy Rutter (Corinne Bohrer) to combat the closing of the establishment.

"One of the creators of 'American Pie' spoke to me once and he said what he liked about the sex comedies that I made is that the people in them were nice to each other," Clark says. "So many of the films being made had people in it that weren't friendly to each other but rather have a sarcastic attitude towards one another. My films, I always tried to have all the good guys like one another. Even though they'd play tricks on Eugene or whatever the character would be, they still were doing it with a certain amount of kindness and fun."

While "Joysticks" was the first to portray the arcade as a meeting ground, others would follow. Produced by Troma and directed by David Cohen, "Hollywood Zap!" from 1986 contains a surprising amount of warmth from the exploitation

company that brought us "Class of Nuke 'Em High." In it, Tucker "Downer" Downs (Ivan E. Roth) leaves his unsatisfying career of being a retail clerk to find his father. On the way, Tucker discovers video game hustler Nash (Ben Frank) who is attempting to locate and beat the score of a "Zaxxon" champion. The two men learn on their way to achieving their respective goals that they have far more in common than they thought.

Another bonding-by-arcade flick, "The Wizard" from 1989, follows Corey (Fred Savage) and half-brother Jimmy (Luke Edwards) as they hitchhike and swindle their way to California for the Video Game Championship. On their journey, they encounter Haley (Jenny Lewis), a hard-nosed teenager who takes a liking to the duo after meeting over a game of "Double Dragon." Together, the threesome finds the support among each other that none of them have in their broken families.

Although "Hollywood Zap!" and "The Wizard" maintain cult followings, neither reached the theatrical success of "Joysticks." But even though Clark's ode to the female figure and video game innuendo became the #1 movie in the United States the week it came out, it never received a sequel. Even in 1983, Clark (whose website www.greydonclark.com sells exclusive photos from all his films including "Joysticks") could see the inevitable change.

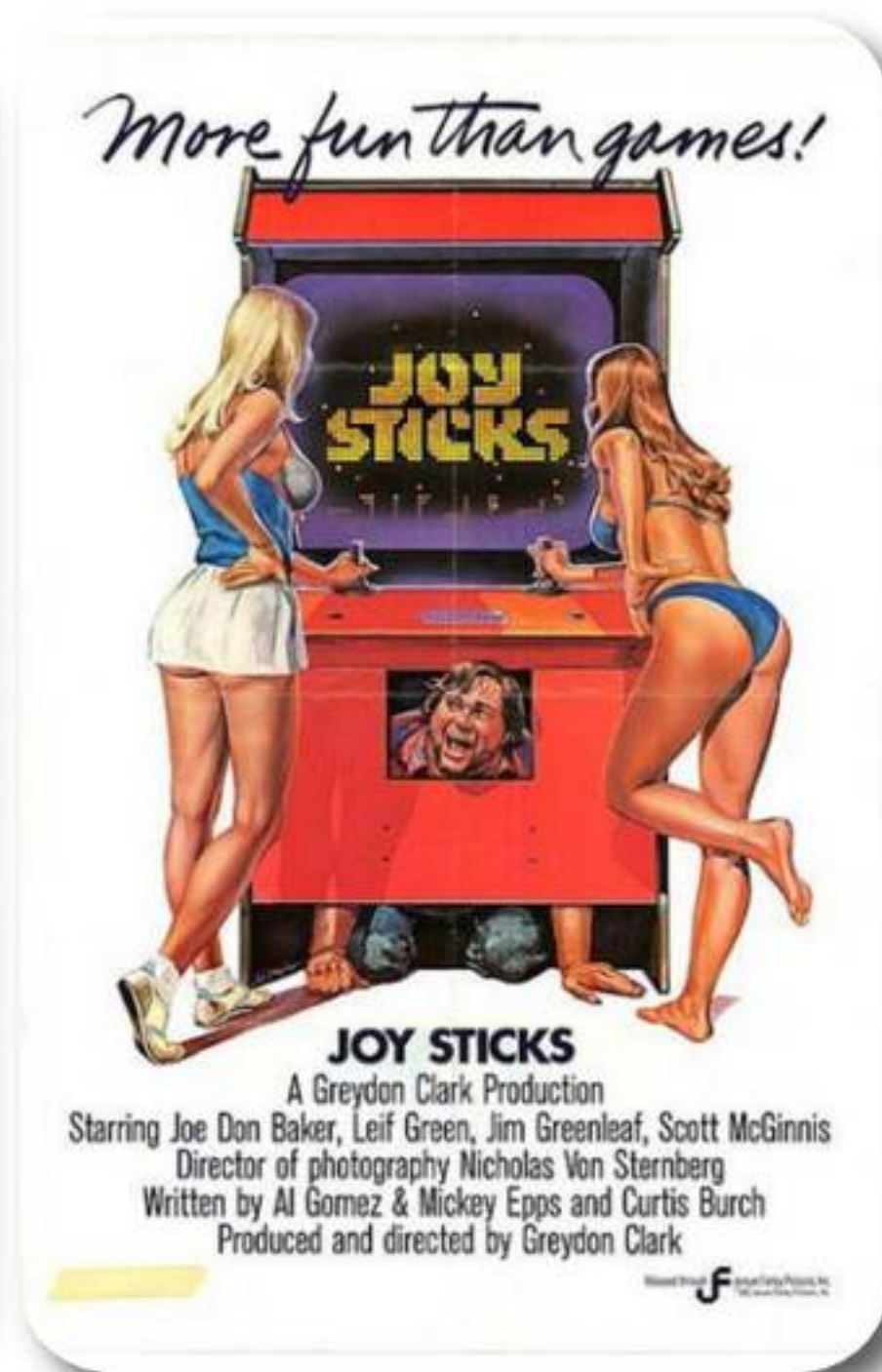
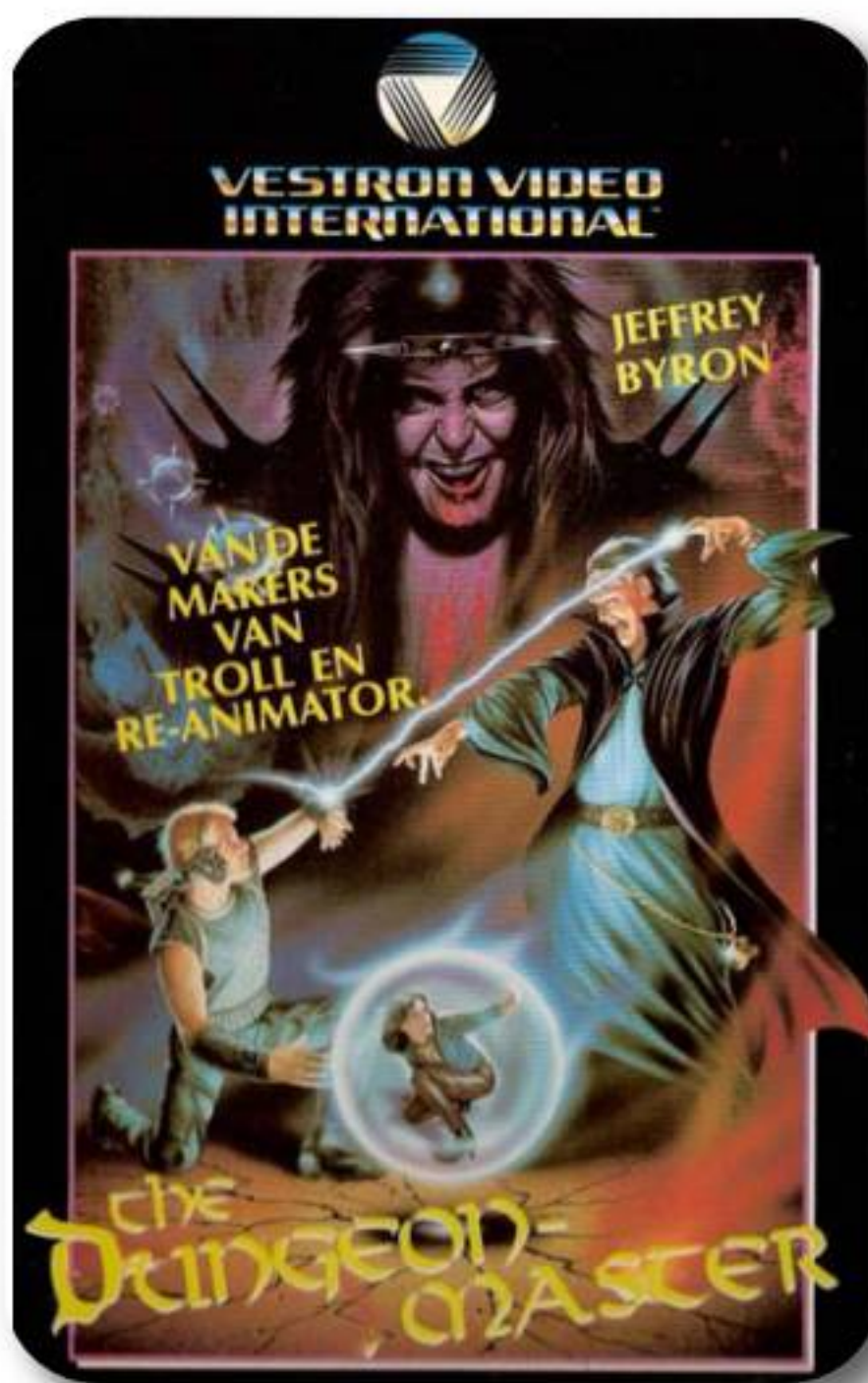
The social arcade atmosphere found in "Joysticks" was dying.

"The video arcade business started going down and even though the picture was a major success at the time, I didn't feel that I could come up with a sequel that made any sense because the bloom was kind of off the rose of the arcade business," Clark remembers. "Now, the video game business grew and grew and grew, as I said is huge and continues to be huge and always will be, but it's almost exclusively a home-video business."

The decline had already begun in 1982 when the video game business stopped growing. The arcade machines were the first to feel the effects. The once ubiquitous machines were yanked from grocery stores and restaurants. The times were changing. And one movie would represent the end of an era more than all others. One would encapsulate the end of both our childhood games and the idea that, eventually, the games have to be turned off.

3. "Cloak & Dagger" and the Home Console

In 1984, "Cloak & Dagger" was released. It was the first video game film to only use a cartridge-based console, an Atari 5200, as a central plot device. The era of the arcade dominance was over. It would be a slow transition, but eventually the arcade





would no longer be relatable to movie goers. We wouldn't go out to play games. We went home with them. They became our roommates. Our guests.

"Cloak & Dagger" scribe Tom Holland, and future director of classics such as "Child's Play" and "Fright Night," was confronted with the task to rewrite a 1940s film called "The Window" (based on the short story by Cornell Woolrich). When he noticed that there wasn't enough story to make a modern movie, Holland came up with the idea of an alternative character, Jack Flack, based on his own hobbies.

"I was in love with 'Dungeons and Dragons' and what was going on then," Holland describes. "We're back in the time of 'Pong.' And that lead me into the emerging game market that was coming out then. We turned it all into a game, because it felt like a spy game to begin with. I needed that character in the game who was the boy's invisible friend, Jack Flack."

"Cloak & Dagger" is about 11-year-old Davey (Henry Thomas) who imagines that Jack Flack (Dabney Coleman, also in "Wargames"), a fictional character ripped out of Davey's favorite video and role-playing games, has begun to accompany him on his wild imagined adventures.

While attempting to run an errand for his video-game store owner and all-around McWhiteboy Morris (William Forsythe), Davey accidentally witnesses a real murder. Before dying, the man gives Davey an Atari 5200 game cartridge of "Cloak & Dagger" containing special military information. When Davey unsuccessfully tries to convince his father (also Dabney Coleman), a military air traffic controller, of the game's importance, Davey and Jack Flack take matters into their own hands.

"['Cloak & Dagger'] is about growing up. It's about taking the step out of childhood, because his father tries to save him. He's growing up and trying to accept his father, falling in love with his father. You put away your boyish things," Holland says. "There's something sad and sweet because you're putting your toys away. And Jack is there to help him make that transition even if Jack Flack is figment of his imagination."

Many of the '80s video games films handled themes of growing up by having the main characters emerging from trappings of their childhood. Alex Rogan in "The Last Starfighter" abandons his no-future, poverty roots to become a hero in the Rylan Star League with skills he achieved

by playing "Starfighter." Jimmy in "The Wizard" is no longer picked on by bullies who steal his cap and push him on the ground, but cheered when winning the video game competition. Even Tucker in "Hollywood Zap!" finds his father while following Nash on Nash's path to achieving a high score on a video game

However, "Cloak & Dagger" differs. Davey doesn't find acceptance or overcomes his problems by playing video games. He finds it with his father. He finds it in his actual life. Davey abandons Jack Flack, who is constantly getting him into further trouble. At the end, there is no "Jack Flack" emerging from the fire to hug and hold Davey. There's his father. The video game, the cartridge, and Jack Flack are nowhere to be seen.

The realness was also reflected in the content of "Cloak & Dagger." Davey is in danger. Real danger. This is no video game.

"Well, I was very lucky. I don't know if I could get away with that now or anytime within the last twenty years. I have been criticized, because putting an adolescent in danger is a movie no-no. They do it in outrageous forms now, but there's no reality

to it, but 'Cloak & Dagger' was played for neo-realism," Holland explains. "I've been criticized for the speech the bad guy on the river walk says he's going to blow out his kneecaps and then shoot him in the stomach so he dies slowly. I've been criticized for that speech being too rough for kids, for parents, so I don't know how I ever got that through censors (laughs)."

Holland, who considers "Cloak & Dagger" one of his favorite films, reveals that the film isn't about any video game. "Cloak & Dagger" is about life. The video game is only a prop.

"['Cloak and Dagger'] touches on so many themes I like. It's got heart. It's about a family healing itself. Not the 'dressing,' like the games and everything. It's 'Puff the Magic Dragon' by Peter, Paul, and Mary. You put away your toy things like your dragon. You feel sad. At least, I always thought that there was the pathos from Jack Flack. That Jack Flack knew he was being put back into the closet until the next little boy found him. I mean those are themes that Pixar has dealt with for God sakes. It had a healing relationship with

your father, single family. And it showed a little boy having pluck. And who doesn't want that?" the director explains.

While Jack Flack would be left for the next child and the video game industry would be quieted until the Nintendo Entertainment System's emergence in North America in 1985, it didn't mean the end of the video game movie. They were just turned into the toys that were taken out of the closet less often.

They also became more diverse. As the 1990s began, virtual reality became the rage. "The Lawnmower Man," "Brain-scan," and "Arcade" sucked us into evil video games (an idea first established by "Tron"). More recently, there's been 2009's "Gamer" about an online game controlling its players and Nickelodeon's "Best Player" from 2011 about competing players. However, documentaries have turned into a new source for discovering why we play video games. Small movies like "The King of Kong" opened the market up for slew of similar titles such as "Chasing Ghosts." The video game documentary has now become its own sub-genre.

But the mainstream video game movie transformed further. They went from being about people playing video games to the video games themselves. When "Super Mario Bros." hit theaters in 1993 and was quickly followed by "Double Dragon" in 1994, the line between film and games were forever blurred. Video games didn't need to be played anymore. "Resident Evil" and "Tomb Raider" could be watched and not interacted with. There was no need for a console or controller. No players were necessary.

However, the video games films were about all about players in the 1980s. They were about social misfits. They were about maturity. They were about friends. They were about McWhiteboys. They were about fears. But most importantly, they were about us.

Thanks to Brett Weiss, author of the "Classic Video Games" series of book for his insight on the topic. Check him out at: <http://brettweisswords.blogspot.com/>

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80s Nouveau

Joe Dante Revisits Family Horror-Comedy with *The Hole*.

by Fallon Masterson, @scarsfallon

It's hard for Joe Dante to talk about his kinda-new movie *The Hole* (filmed in 2009, but released only this September), without talking about the 1980s. According to Joe, despite the 3D technology accompanying the film, *The Hole* is really the product of a different time. "It's a pseudo-family horror film," he explained at the movie's Midwest premiere in Chicago this August. "A little darker than maybe (kids) are used to." These were the types of genre-blending movies that Dante relished in the 80s. They were popular. "And could still be popular today," Dante mused.

Of course, some of Dante's own movies

are the ones that first spring to mind when thinking of horror with slapstick sensibility that would appeal to kids in the 80s. *Gremlins* practically dominated the market in that arena. But there were so many more. *Killer Klowns From Outerspace*. *The Monster Squad*. *The Lost Boys*. *Little Shop of Horrors*. *My Best Friend is a Vampire*. And then there were those that played it mostly for laughs, but were premised around a horror element. *Beetlejuice*. *The Ghostbusters* movies. Even *Clue*, to an extent.

They were all movies you could watch with your family. When I saw Joe Dante would be screening *The Hole* and appearing in Chicago, I went because of the long-standing sentimental attachment I have to his 1989 movie, *The 'Burbs*. For me, that was the movie I grew up with -- the one my mother took my older brother and I to rent over and over again; one she could actually watch and enjoy it with us.

Like *Gremlins*, it was a movie that was wacky enough to make me hit rewind and quote along with my brother, but just creepy enough to be more mysterious and enthralling than any of the "regular" comedies kids watched. These movies felt special, and with each subsequent viewing as I grew older, the movies changed along with me. I could suddenly catch a new joke that I'd lacked the savvy or irony to understand a year earlier. I could smirk at them. And then, mysteriously, one day these movies weren't creepy at all. They were COMEDIES! How had I ever not known?

Dante talked about this phenomenon, how it's difficult to do, but yet something he strived for with *The Hole*. Again, he references the movies of the 80s. "You could take a family to a movie, and they could all get different layers of meaning out of it"





Today, when even superhero movies are one notably Ultra Serious and seemingly geared more for adults, you can't help but wonder whether distributors were at a loss for how to market this kind of film -- although that's not what resulted in the three year delay. The hold up for *The Hole*, as Dante tells it, has to do with his desire to make the film in 3D. Dante had dabbled with the technology in 2003, with the short film *The Haunted Lighthouse*, based on an R.L. Stine story. (Which was actually shot in 4D, meaning it involved William Castle-esque effects, like shooting water at the audience. Unsurprisingly, Dante is a glowing admirer of Castle and other schlock showmen like Roger Corman.) When Dante read the script for *The Hole* it was in a pre-*Avatar* world, but he recognized that the technology was evolved enough now that the movie could

be shot in 3D for a reasonable budget. "You can actually bring people into the movie with 3D," Dante said. "Two-thirds of *The Hole* takes place in a basement. This was a way to avoid the claustrophobia of the basement and bring people in."

But after the success of *Avatar*, suddenly films that, unlike Dante's, weren't even shot in 3D were getting the 3D treatment in post-production. Theaters with limited 3D capable screens were soon showing fare like *Clash of the Titans*. *The Hole*, with its lack of stardom, got squeezed out. By the time screens became available, the film was considered "old" and no longer viable.

Stars or no stars, the acting in *The Hole* is one of its positives, specifically the dynamic of the two brothers. Because of

Dante's preface, while watching the movie I kept wondering when it would feel "80s." Where I would sense the specifics. I found it first in the relationship between Dane (Chris Massoglia) and Lucas (Nathan Gamble of *The Mist*). They felt like real brothers, and had the sort of goofy yet protective banter with each other that reminded me of *The Lost Boys*. Their mother (Teri Polo, Ben Stiller's squeeze from *Meet the Parents*) also fit into that fold. A single mother, occupied with trying to juggle her career and family, the two brothers depend mostly on themselves. And yet, no one feels sorry for themselves or doses themselves with prescription pills from child specialists. Everyone just takes care of their own business. It feels all so healthy and non-2012.

Plot wise, the premise is simple. The two





brothers and their neighbor find a hole in their floor that, once opened, unleashes dark, supernatural crap that torments the psyche of anyone misfortunate enough to look into the hole. (The scenes involving Lucas especially steal the movie.) It's probably best not to say much more -- Dante said one of the selling points for him, when deciding to direct the movie, was that it goes somewhere you don't expect. Overall, the action feels somewhere in line with movies like a pumped up 1989's *Little Monsters*. But with a more jump scares and more pervading sense of doom. The stakes are higher than a typical "family" movie. To stick with the *Little Monsters* comparison, in that movie Fred Savage was afraid he and his brother would be turned into monsters. In *The*

Hole, Dane and Lucas are afraid they'll be killed. It's these subtleties that can give the film appeal to an older, more horror-oriented audience. That and the winks and nudges Joe Dante gives horror fans. For example, he admitted to the audience after the Chicago screening that one of the film's ghostly tormentors, a little girl (actually played by a boy!), is a rip-off of a character in Mario Bava's *Kill Baby, Kill*.

The more adult intensity was something Dante worried about when facing the MPAA. "It's not what you show, it's how intense it appears," he said, when discussing how they determine a rating. "And in a picture like this, it's not about slicing people's throats.... It's all psychological."

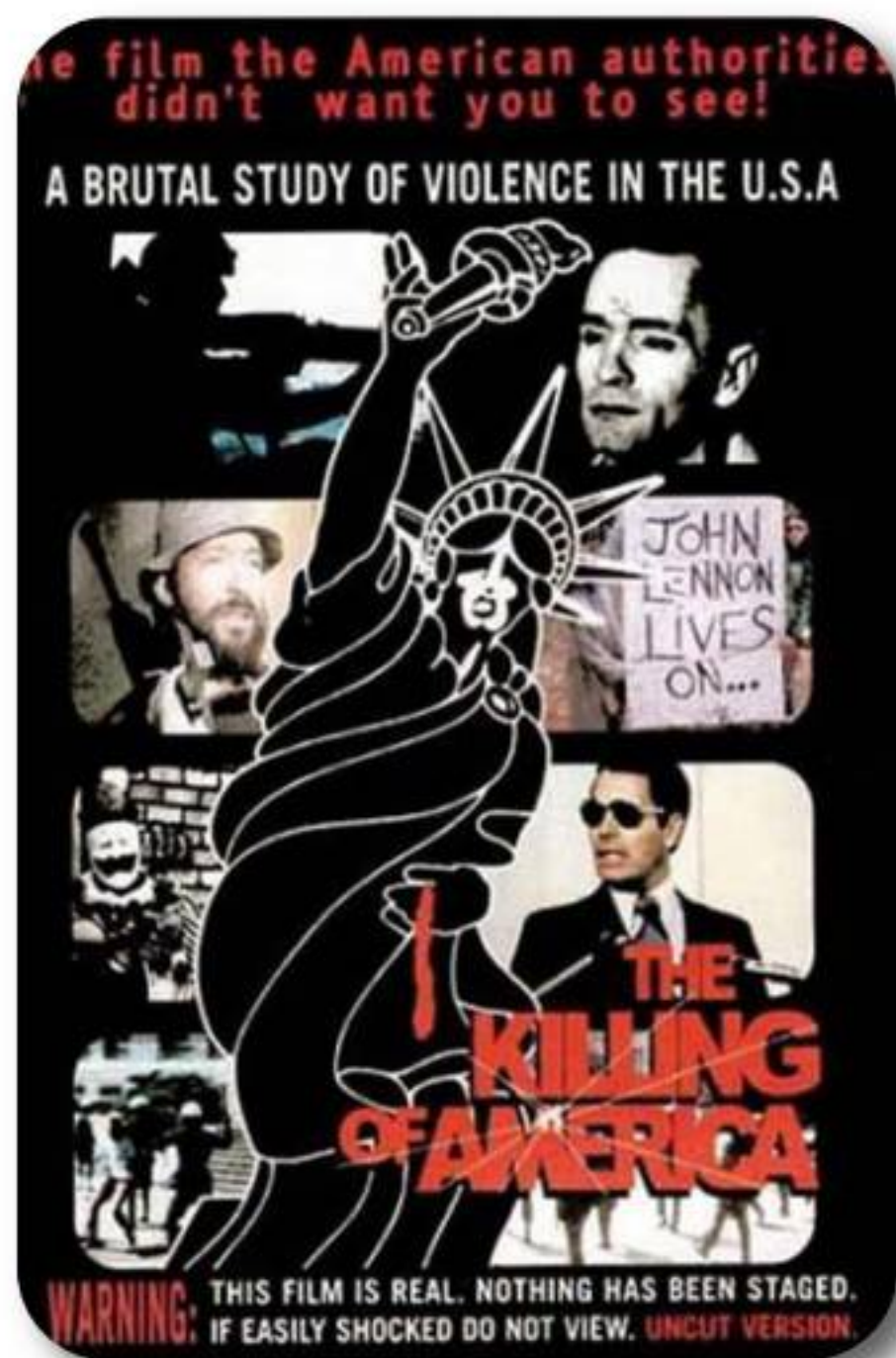
Because the movie has ultimately ended up going the Video-On-Demand route, MPAA ratings are less of a concern. But for fans, it's a treat to get to see this film, even in 2D. And for Joe Dante, it's an accomplishment too. Towards the end of the Midwest premiere Q&A session, a dark-haired man shuffled up to the mic in the aisles and, with no preface, asked Dante in a microphonic boom: "What comes out of your hole?"

After the theater calmed down and Dante collected himself, the man rephrased his question. "I mean, I want to know. What scares you?"

Dante paused. "Not working."



Review: The Killing of America (1982)



by Philip Eil

"I'm an American and I went off the deep end," Ed Kemper says. He is sitting in a grey room, wearing grey clothes. He has a mustache, thick sideburns, dark-framed glasses, and shaggy hair. He has an I.Q. of 136, the narrator tells us. He is the most talented reader of books for the blind in the prison where he will spend the rest of his life. He has been there since 1973, when he revealed that he murdered his mother, his grandparents, and numerous college coeds, whose lifeless bodies he sometimes dismembered, raped, and cannibalized. "I am an American and I killed Americans," Kemper says. "I am a human being and I killed human beings. And I did it in my society."

Welcome to *The Killing of America*, Sheldon Renan's 1982 documentary in which we not only meet Kemper, but Sirhan Sirhan, who shot Robert Kennedy; David Berkowitz, who believed the neighbor's dog was the voice of the devil; John

Wayne Gacy, the kiddie-clown-turned-rapist-and-murderer who finally ran out of space below his house to dump bodies; and countless other American antiheroes. The documentary was bound for VHS-era obscurity but, thanks to YouTube, *The Killing* still burns, bleeds, smokes, and screams. With a click of your cursor, you can resurrect Ted Bundy and have him swagger into your living room.

But should you?

That depends on what you're looking for. In terms of pure, visceral voyeurism -- the basest true crime appetite -- *The Killing* succeeds like perhaps no other film. Present-day cable T.V. shows tends to suggest gore more than actually show it or, if they do, they offer a stern Parental Advisory beforehand. *The Killing* offers no such warning. Aside from the bloody-red-on-black message that opens the film -- "ALL OF THE FILM YOU ARE ABOUT TO SEE IS REAL, NOTHING HAS BEEN STAGED" -- it plows forward with footage of body parts being weighed on a hanging scale in a medical examiner's office and John F. Kennedy's head exploding in slow motion. Do not want to watch this film after lunch.

The film isn't merely a bloodbath, though. It's also a useful, if not totally linear or logical, history text. The first chunk of the film focuses on the deaths of Martin Luther King, Jr., the Kennedy brothers, and other public figures. As they accumulate, these assassinations reveal the sobering trap door built into American democracy: it takes millions of votes to place the right man or woman into office, but it takes only one psycho to extract them. The screen flashes to footage from a bustling public event on May 15, 1972 -- an appearance by Alabama governor, George Wallace, on the first steps of a Presidential of a campaign. Then a man with a gun materializes from the crowd and shoots him. The candidate is on the ground, bleeding, squirming. He will sit in a wheelchair for the rest of his life. "Presidential elections were now being decided by killers," the narrator says.

From here the film gains momentum, but loses control. The vignettes grow quicker and choppy as *The Killing* shifts to a roll call of depraved Americans. Even the most loyal true crime readers will find a sniper,

a stabber whom they hadn't previously known. They range from the relatively anonymous -- like James Hoskins, an Everyman who shot his girlfriend, invaded a Cincinnati news station to take an interview, then shot himself in the newscaster's before police arrive -- to the ubiquitous. Charles Manson. Ted Bundy.

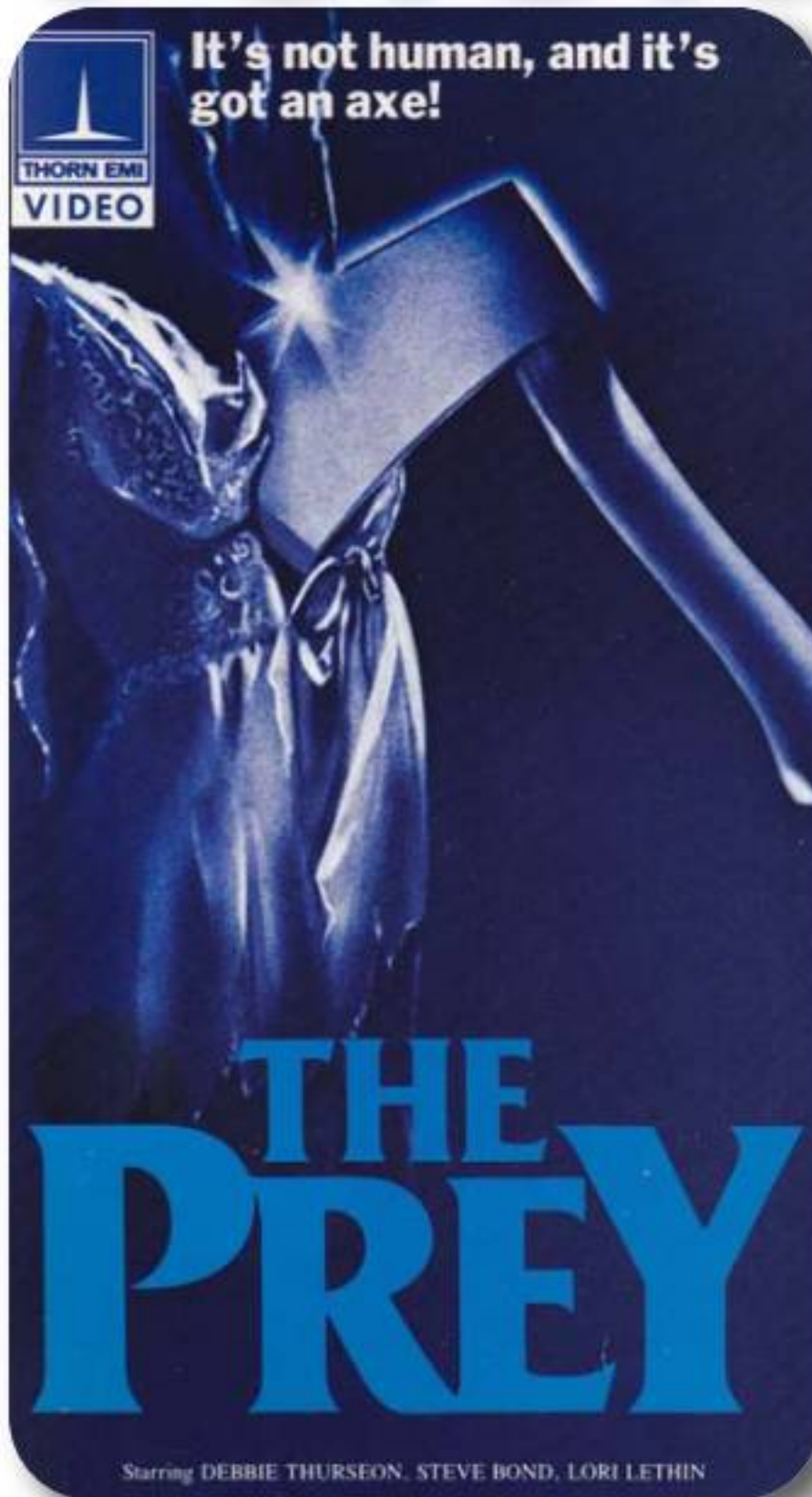
In a stunning reel of blurry behind-the-scenes footage, we go inside an interrogation room where "The Hillside Strangler," Kenneth Bianchi, is speaking with a detective showing him photographs. "...this broad I've never seen before...this broad I've never seen before...this broad I killed," he says. Then he stops to lean in toward the investigators face to snarl, "Am I going too fast for you?" Later, in perhaps the film's most haunting sequence, we see People's Temple pastor, Jim Jones, at the camp he named after himself -- Jonestown -- in the steamy jungles of Guayana.

Drums pound ferociously and the crowd screams in delight as Jones dances with a young woman. He holds a microphone in one hand and a live, squirming snake in the other.

The Killing of America is no doubt an ancestor of those shameless shows (that I shamelessly watch) like E!'s "20 Most Horrifying Hollywood Murders" and CourtTV's "Disorder in the Court: The 20 Most Outrageous Courtroom Moments." But instead of owning its campiness, *The Killing* seems to think it rises above it. And this is why the film ultimately fails. As it winds on, the names and statistics fly at viewers faster and faster, the numbers of victims (who nearly all remain nameless) and the motives are almost indistinguishable. Who was the teenage girl who shot elementary school employees from a window in her house because, "Mondays are so boring"? And who was the teen boy who went on a killing rampage in an Arizona beauty school because, he said, "I just wanted to make a name for myself"? It is nearly impossible to remember. Eventually, the film simply starts flashing footage of men jumping off balconies and grisly police photos of mangled, without any accompanying information. This isn't art. At best, it is simply a highlight reel of the nightmares from the night before Ronald Reagan's declaration of "morning in America."

M.I.A.: The Horror DVD and Blu-ray Forgot

by Fallon Masterson



From the VHS vs. Betamax showdown of the 1970s, the 80s cleared the way for a definitive winner. Part of the reason was simple. A VHS could hold more hours of entertainment than Betamax. For families at home taping hours of daytime TV or just trying to get the most video for their buck, it was an important distinction. As early as 1981, commerce reports showed Betamax sales on the decline (a 25% drop), and a swell in VHS sales. Betamax shook in the face of this and lost their biggest foothold: quality. Initially a superior image to VHS, Betamax creators, Sony, felt pressure to decrease tape thickness in order to get more hours of video. But it was too little too late. Eventually Sony themselves had no choice but to acknowledge the loss and try to cash in. They released their own VHS players in 1988.

We all know how this story ends. VHS might have won the Betamax battle, but it didn't win the war. In October 2008, a humid warehouse in Palm Springs, Florida, the holdout supplier of VHS tapes sent their final shipment. The last Hollywood film to even release a film on VHS had been two years earlier, with David Cronenberg's *A History of Violence*.

Since then, the last time the VHS reared its head with any sort of notice was the 2010 marketing decision to release *House of the Devil* on VHS. A sign that, today, the format that unleashed hell and Samara upon us in *The Ring* lives on only in nostalgia.

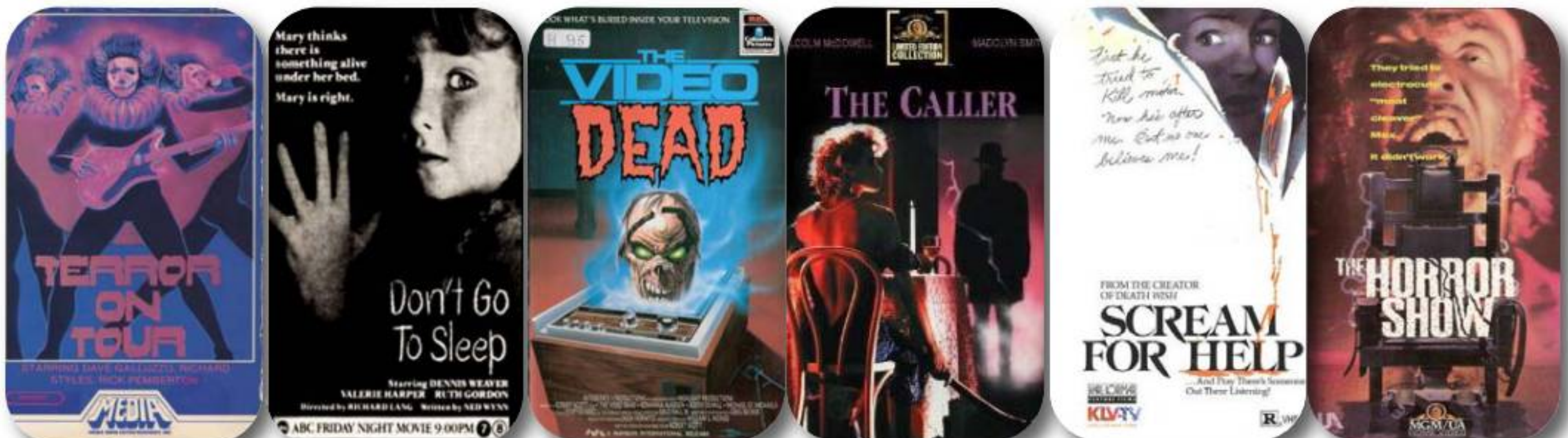
Part of the fun of the 80s VHS rise was the access it gave collectors. Rare, handshot punk shows filled with grainy rage. Banned cult films, recorded and passed on from person to person. Today, the technology exists to restore recordings, to give fans access to pristine images and clear audio for their favorite films. Yet, some titles still languish in VHS-Only

format. They're the subjects of message board debates, petitions to distribution companies,

and low quality bootleg DVD transfers at horror conventions. Sometimes it's not for lack of trying, and filmmakers themselves find their hands tied by rights and distribution (ie: the slow progress of Clive Barker's *Nightbreed Cabal Cut*).

So we wait patiently for the day that distributors find *Suspiria* or *Candyman* on Blu-ray a marketable commodity in America. We bemoan the titles we do find, but not for U.S. players. We look up hacks to make differently regioned DVDs play on our computers or gaming systems. Sometimes we find ways around restrictions. Sometimes we fail. But for the collector, there's nothing like having the real deal right in your hands.

Now if only more than a handful of horror nerds wanted facelifts to these 80s titles.





The List:

Don't Go to Sleep (1982)

The Video Dead (1987)

The Caller (1987)

Scream for Help (1984)

The Horror Show aka House III (1989)

This House Possessed (1981)

Terror on Tour (1980)

The Elevator (aka The Lift) (1983)

To All a Goodnight (1980)

Tattoo (1981)

Trick or Treats (1982)

Murder by Phone (1982)

The Power (1984)

The Prey (1984)

Attack of the Beast Creatures (1985)

Too Scared to Scream (1985)

Night Train to Terror (1985)

Junior (1985)

Appointment with Fear (1985)

Screamplay (1985)

TerrorVision (1986)

The Supernaturals (1986)

Hunter's Blood (1986)

Twisted Nightmare (1987)

The Kindred (1987)

Alien Predator (1985)

My Demon Lover (1987)

Necropolis (1987)

Berserker (1987)

Blue Monkey (1987)

Open House (1987)

Zombie High (1987)

Moon in Scorpio (1987)

Nightflyers (1987)

Demonwarp (1988)

Prison (1988)

Destroyer (1988)

Ghost Riders (1987)

Jack's Back (1988)

Rejuvenatrix (1988)

Lone Wolf (1988)

Cellar Dweller (1988)

Spellbinder (1988)

To Die For (1988)

The Brain (1988)

Ghost Town (1988)

Elves (1989)

The Immortalizer (1989)

Out of the Dark (1988)

Fright Night Part 2 (1988)

Night Life (1989)

Fatal Games (1984)

Home Sweet Home (1981)

Necromancer (1988)

The Ghost Dance (1980)

Island Claws (1980)

Deadly Intruder (1985)

The Loch Ness Horror (1981)

Dogs of Hell (1982)

Blood Lake (1987)

Iced (1988)

Dark Sanity (1982)

Mongrel (1982)

Satan's Blade (1984)

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